The BOY SCOUTS ON THE TRAIL

Bill Brandon

4 8 NE 2
3504 1B

They sent the message quickly, accurately.

THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE TRAIL

By

GEORGE DURSTON

THE SAALFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY

Chicago AKRON, OHIO New York

Made in U. S. A.

Copyright, MCMXXI

By

The Saalfield Publishing Co.

THE BOY SCOUTS ON THE TRAIL

CHAPTER I

PLANS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

"Where are you going to spend the holidays, Frank?"

The speaker was Henri Martin, a French boy of the new type that has sprung up in France since games like football and tennis began to be generally encouraged. He asked the question of his schoolmate, Frank Barnes, son of a French mother and an American father. Frank's name was really Francois; his mother had that much to do with his naming. But he was a typical American boy, none the less, and there was a sharp contrast between his sturdy frame and that of the slighter French boy who had become his best chum in the school both were attending near Paris, at St. Denis.

"I don't really know, Harry," said Frank. "Not exactly, that is. My Uncle Dick is coming over a little later, and I think we'll go to Switzerland." His face clouded a little. "I—I haven't any real home to go to, you know. My father and mother—"

"I know—I know, mon vieux," said Henri, with the quick sympathy of his race. "But until your uncle comes—what then, hein?"

"Why, I'm to wait for him here, at the school," said Frank. "He's a very busy man, you know, and it's hard for him to get away just any time he wants to. He will get here, though, early in August, I think."

"But that won't do at all, Frank!" exclaimed Harry, impulsively. Like many French boys, he spoke English perfectly and with practically no trace of an accent. "To spend a week or two weeks here in the school, all alone! No—I tell you what! I've an idea!"

"What is it?" asked Frank, a little amused at the horror with which his friend heard of the

notion of staying in school after the holidays had begun.

"Why, come home with me until your uncle comes!" said Harry. "That's what you must do. I live not so far away—not so very far. At Amiens. You have heard of it? Oh, we will have fine times, you and I. I am to join the Boy Scouts Francais these holidays!"

He called it Boy Scoots, and Frank roared. The word scout had been retained, without translation, when the French adopted the Boy Scout movement from England, just as words like rosbif, football, and le sport had been adopted into the language. But all these words, or nearly all, have been given a French pronunciation, which give them a strange sound in Anglo-Saxon ears.

"Excuse me, Harry," said Frank, in a moment. "I didn't mean to laugh, but it does sound funny."

"Of course it does, Frank," said Henri, generously. "I speak English, so I can see that. But there's nothing funny about the thing, let me tell you. We began by calling the Boy Scouts

Eclaireurs Francais, but General Baden-Powell didn't like it, so we made the change. Really, we're a good deal like the English and American scouts. We have the same oath—we call it serment, of course, and our manual is just a translation of the English one."

"I was going to join in America, too," said Frank. "But then I came over here, and I didn't know there were scouts here. Do you wear the same sort of uniforms?"

"Yes—just like the English," said Harry. "You could join with me, couldn't you? You're going to be here for a whole year more, aren't you?"

"Yes. My mother"—he gulped a little at the word—"wanted me to know all about France, and never to forget that I had French blood in me, you see. My French grandfather was killed by the Germans at Gravelotte—he was a colonel of the line. And my mother, even though my father was an American, was always devoted to France."

"We are like that—we French," said Harry,

simply. Into his eyes came the look that even French boys have when they remember the days of 1870. "The Germans—yes, they beat us then. We were not ready—we were badly led. But our time will come—the time of La Revanche. Tell me, Frank, you have seen the Place de la Concorde, in Paris?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Do you remember the statue of Strassburg? How it is always draped in black—with mourning wreaths?"

"Yes."

"The day is coming when the black shall be stripped off! Alsace-Lorraine—they are French at heart, those lost provinces of ours! They shall be French again in name, too. Strassburg shall guard the Rhine for us again—Metz shall be a French fortress once more. We shall fight again—and next time we shall be ready! We shall win!"

"I hope so—if war comes again," said Frank, soberly. "But—"

"*If* war comes?" said Harry, surprised. "Don't

you know it must come? France knows that—France makes ready. We shall not seek the war. But it is not enough for us to desire peace. The Prussians are afraid of us. They will never rest content while we are strong. They thought they had crushed us forever in 1870—but France was too great for them to crush! They made us pay a thousand million francs—they thought we should take years and years to pay, and that meanwhile they would keep their soldiers on our land, in our fortresses! But no! France paid, and quickly. And ever since we have prepared for the time when they would try to finish their work."

"If war comes, I am for France," said Frank, still soberly. "But war is a dreadful thing, Henri."

"We know that—we in France," said Harry. "But there are things that are worse than war, Frank. A peace that is without honor is among them. We do not want to fight, but we are not afraid. When the time comes, as it is sure to come, we shall be ready. But enough of that.

There will be no war this year or next. We have not settled about your coming home with me. You will come?"

"I'd love to," said Frank. "If the head master says I can, I will most gladly. But will your people want me?"

"My friends are their friends," said Harry. "My mother says always, 'Bring a friend with you, Henri.' Oh, there will be plenty for us to do, too. We shall take long walks and play tennis and ride and shoot. Let us settle it to-day. Come now to the office with me. We will ask the head master."

They went forthwith to speak to Monsieur Donnet, the head of the school, who received them in his office. The school was a small one but it numbered among its pupils several English and American boys, whose parents wanted them for one reason or another to acquire a thorough knowledge of French. He heard their request, which was put by Henri, pleasantly.

"Yes, that will be very well," he said. "I have

been thinking of you, Barnes. Your uncle has written to me that he will be here about the tenth or fifteenth of August, and asked permission for you to stay here until then. But—"

They waited, while M. Donnet thought for a moment.

"Yes, this will be much better," he said. "I—I have been a little troubled about you, Barnes. If all were well, you might stay here very well. But—" Again he paused.

"These are strange times," he said. "Boys, have you read in the newspapers of the trouble between Austria and Servia?"

They looked startled.

"A little, sir" said Frank. "There's always trouble, isn't there, in those parts?"

"Yes, but this may—who knows?—be different. I do not say there is more danger than usual but I have heard things, from friends, that have made me thoughtful. I am a colonel of the reserve!"

Henri's eyes gleamed suddenly, as they had a few minutes before when he had talked of how

France was ready for what might be in store for her.

"Do you mean that there may be war, sir?" he asked, leaning forward eagerly.

"No one knows," said the master. "But there are strange tales. Aeroplanes that no one recognizes have flown above the border in the Vosges. There are tales of fresh troops that the Germans are sending to Metz, to Düsseldorf, to Neu Breisach." He struck his hand suddenly on his desk. "But this I feel—that when war comes it will be like the stroke of lightning from a clear sky! When there is much talk, there is never war. When it comes it will be because the diplomats will not have time, they and the men with money, the Rothschilds and the others, to stop it. And if there should be trouble, not a man would be left in this school. So, Barnes, I should be easier if you were with Martin. I approve. That is well, boys."

Both boys were excited as they left the office.

"He talks as if he knew something, or felt some-

thing, that is still a secret!" said Frank, excitedly. "I wonder—"

"Of no use to wonder," said Henri. Really, he was calmer than his companion. "What is to come must come. But you are coming home with me, Frank. We know that much. And that is good—that is the best news we could have, isn't it?"

"It's certainly good news for me," said Frank, happily. "Oh, Harry, I get so tired of living in school or in hotels all the time! It will seem good to be in a home again, even if it isn't my own home!"

CHAPTER II

TO THE COLORS

In those days late in July, France, less than almost any country in Europe, certainly far less than either England or America, was able to realize the possibilities of trouble. As a matter of fact, not for years had the peace of Europe been so assured, apparently. President Poincare of France had gone to visit the Czar of Russia, and the two rulers had exchanged compliments. The alliance of France and Russia, they told one another, made war impossible, or nearly so. The Emperor of Germany was on a yachting cruise; even the old Austrian Kaiser, though required to watch affairs because of the death of his heir, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, murdered by a Serb fanatic at Sarajeve, had left Vienna.

Even when the storm cloud began to gather the French government did all it could to suppress the news. The readiness of France was not in ques-

tion. France was always ready, as Henri Martin had said. Since the grim and terrible lesson of 1870 she had made up her mind never again to give the traditional enemy beyond the Rhine—and, alas, now on this side of the Rhine as well!—a chance to catch her unprepared.

What the government wanted was to prevent the possibility that an excited populace, especially in Paris, might force its hand. If war came it meant that Germany should provoke it—if possible, begin it. It was willing to sacrifice some things for that. And this was because, in the years of peace, France had won a great diplomatic victory, the fruits of which the country must preserve. In 1870 France had had to face Germany alone. She had counted upon help from Austria, now Germany's firm friend and ally, but then still smarting under the blow of the defeat four years before. She had hoped for help, perhaps, from Roumania and from Russia.

But all that Germany, by skillful trickery, had rendered vain. She had made France seem to be

the aggressor, and France had forfeited the sympathy of England and of Austria as a result. Alone she had been no match for Germany. And alone she would be as little a match for Germany in 1914 as in 1870. But she had prepared herself. Now Russia, no matter what the reason for war, would be with her. And, if France was attacked, England was almost sure to join her. Everything would depend on that. With the great English navy to bottle up the German fleet, to blockade the German coasts, France felt that she was secure. And so the government was resolved that nothing should happen to make possible the loss of England's friendship; nothing that should give England even the shadow of an excuse for remaining neutral.

So what the newspapers printed of the threats that Austria was making against Servia was carefully censored. There was nothing to show that Austria was assuming a warlike attitude, and that Russia, the friend of the little Slav countries in the Balkans, was getting ready to take the part of

Servia. There was nothing to show what the French government and every newspaper editor in Paris knew must be a fact—that Austria must have had assurance of German support, since she could not hope to make a winning fight, unaided, against the huge might of Russia.

That was why all over France life proceeded in the regular way, calm, peaceful, without event. Some there were who knew that Europe was closer to a general war than since the end of Napoleon's dream of conquest. But the masses of the people did not know it. All over France the soldiers were active; the new recruits, reporting for the beginning of their three years of military service, were pouring into the depots, the headquarters of the army corps, to be assigned to their regiments. But that was something that happened every year. In a country where every man, if he is not a cripple or diseased, has to be a soldier for three years, the sight of a uniform, even of a long column of marching troops, means nothing.

And then, with the most startling abruptness,

there came a change. Nothing official, as yet. But suddenly the government allowed the real news, or most of it, to be printed. Austria had made demands of Servia that no country could meet! Russia had protested! Russia and Austria were mobilizing! Germany had sent an ultimatum to Russia, demanding that she stop massing her troops in Poland and on the borders of East Prussia.

"It means war," said Henri Martin to Frank. Gone was the exultation of his voice. Frank had noticed that, since the first appearance of the really ominous news, the excitability of his French schoolmates had disappeared. They were quiet; far quieter than American boys would have been in the same case, he thought.

"But this is not France's quarrel," said Frank. "She cares nothing for Servia."

"Servia? Bah! No one cares for Servia—except Austria and Russia! Servia is only an excuse. Austria wants to get some ports and Russia wants them, too, or wants a friendly country

to have them. But I will tell you why it means war, Frank, my friend. It is because Guillaume, their Kaiser, thinks it is the chance to crush France!"

"Why now more than at any other time, Harry?"

"Lieutenant Marcel told me what he thinks. It is that England is having much trouble. In Ireland there is rebellion, almost, over the home rule. The Germans think England will be afraid to fight, that she will have to think of her own troubles. He does not know those English, that Kaiser! They have their quarrels among themselves. But if anyone else interferes—pouf! The quarrel is over—until the one who interferes is beaten."

"Yes, I believe that. We're like that in America, too. Why, right after the Civil War, we nearly had to fight about Mexico. And the men in the South, who had just been fighting the northern army, were all ready to volunteer and fight for the country."

"Well, that is one reason, then. And, for an-

other, France is getting stronger, and Russia too. For a few years after the war with the Japanese, Russia was weak. But now she is getting strong again, and Austria is getting weaker. If Germany and Austria can ever win it is now—that is what the Kaiser believes. And why must France fight? Even if she is not attacked she must help Russia because of the treaty."

"But she didn't fight with Russia against Japan."

"Because only one country was at war against her. If England had joined Japan, we should have had to fight with Russia against her," Henri explained.

It was during the morning recess that they held this conversation. Now the bell called them back to school. The class to which they went was one that was being taught by M. Donnet himself, the head master. He was at his place by his desk, and the boys had taken their seats. Suddenly, just as the master was about to speak, a servant appeared with a telegram in his hand. He took it to the

master. M. Donnet tore it open and read it, while a serious, grave look came into his eyes. Then he stood up.

"Mes enfants," he said, his whole manner somehow changed from the one they knew, "I am called away from you." He stood very straight now; Frank had no difficulty, as he had had before, in imagining the schoolmaster as a soldier. "France needs me—our France. I go to Luneville, to be prepared to receive the brave men who will fight under my command if—"

He stopped.

"If war shall come!" he finished the interrupted sentence. "I leave you. No man knows what the next few hours may bring forth. The order of 'mobilisation generale' has not yet been issued. Only superior officers are called for as yet. Perhaps I may return. If not, I shall exhort all of you who are sons of La Patrie to do your duty. You are too young to fight, but you are none of you too young to be brave and loyal, to help your parents, and your mothers if your fathers are

needed by the fatherland for active service.

"You are not too young to show courage, no matter what may come. You are not too young to keep alive the spirit of the sons of France—the spirit that won at Austerlitz and Jena, that rose, like the phoenix from its ashes, after Gravelotte and Sedan, when the foe believed that France lay crushed for evermore! Perhaps you, like all who are French, may be called upon to make sacrifices, sometimes to go hungry. But remember always that it is not only those who face the foe on the battle line who can serve the fatherland!"

He drew himself up again.

"Farewell, then, mes enfants!" he said. "I go to meet again those other children I am to lead! Vive la France!"

For a moment, as he moved to the door, there was silence.

And it was Frank Barnes, only half French, who jumped to the top of a desk and raised his voice in the most stirring of all patriotic airs—the Marseillaise.

With a will they joined him, English, American and French, for all were there. Slowly, still singing, they followed the master from the class-room, and gathered outside in the open air of the school yard. And from other rooms, from all over the school, masters and boys poured out to join them and to swell the chorus. Outside, in the street, a passing battalion of the infantry of the line, made up of smiling young soldiers, heard and took up the chorus, singing as they marched.

There was no need of questions from those who heard the singing. In a moment the discipline of the school went by the board. And, when the song was done, they still remained together, waiting. In ten minutes, M. Donnet appeared from the door of his own house. But now he was transformed. He was in the uniform of his rank, his sword was by his side; a servant carried his bags. He strode through the ranks of cheering boys to the gate, saluting right and left as he did so.

CHAPTER III

THE CALL TO ARMS

"This does not yet mean war!"

So M. Donnet had cried, in a final word of warning, meaning, if possible, to do his part in the government's plan, still in force, of restraining the passions of the French people. No. It did not mean war. Not quite. But it meant that war was inevitable; that within a few hours, at the most, mobilization would be ordered. This was on Saturday. And that evening Germany declared war on Russia. Within an hour posters were everywhere. The general mobilization had been ordered.

The teachers in that school were young men. On the word they went. Each knew what he had to do. Each had his little book of instructions. He needed no orders. The mere fact that mobilization had been ordered was all he needed to know. He knew already where he must report,

where his uniform and his equipment would be given to him, and which regiment he was to join. He was a soldier by virtue of the three years, or the two, he had spent already with the colors. He did not have to be drilled; all that had been done. He knew how to shoot, how to live in camp, how to march. If he was a cavalryman, he knew how to ride; if an artilleryman, how to handle the big guns.

And as with the teachers, so it was with the other men about the school,—the gardeners, the servants, all of them. Within an hour of the time when the order was issued, they were on their way and the school was deserted, save for boys and one or two old men, who bewailed the fact that they were too old to fight. In the streets St. Denis looked like a deserted village. All the young men were going.

Swiftly preparations were made to close the school. Madame Donnet, left in charge when her husband went, called the boys together.

"You must get home," she said. "Here you

cannot stay. There will be no way to care for you. And soon, too, the school will be used as a hospital. So it was in 1870. I shall stay, and I shall prepare for what is to come. M. Donnet telegraphed yesterday to all the parents, bidding them be ready for what has come. I will give money for traveling expenses. And in happier times we shall meet again."

Save for the friendly offer Henri had already made, Frank Barnes might well have been in a sorry plight. And, indeed, he offered now to let his chum withdraw his invitation.

"I have plenty of money, Harry," he said. "And if I go into Paris, to the American ambassador, or the consul, he will see that I am all right until my uncle comes. Your family won't want a guest now."

But Harry wouldn't hear of this.

"Now more than ever!" he said. "It will be different. True—not as we had planned it before this came. But you shall come, and perhaps we shall be able to do something for France with the

Boy Scouts. We shall see. But this much is certain—I think we shall not be able to go to Amiens at once. Amiens is in the north—it is that way that the soldiers must go, soldiers from Paris, from Tours, from Orleans, from all the south. It is from the north that the Germans will come. Perhaps they will try to come through Belgium. So, until the troops have finished with the railways, we must wait. We will go to my aunt in Paris."

And go they did to Madame Martin, Henri's aunt, who lived in a street between the Champs Elysees and the Avenue de l'Alma, not far from the famous arch of triumph that is the centre of Paris. At the station in St. Denis, where they went from the school, they found activity enough to make up, and more than make up, for the silence and stillness everywhere else. The station was choked with soldiers, reservists preparing to report on the next day, the first of actual mobilization. Women were there, mothers, wives, sweethearts, to bid good-bye to these young French-

men they might never see again because of war.

And there was no room on the trains to Paris for any save soldiers. The gates of the station were barred to all others, and Frank and Harry went back to the school.

"I know what we can do, of course," said Harry. "It isn't very far. We'll leave our bags here at the school, and make packs of the things we need. And then we'll ride in on our bicycles. We were stupid not to think of that before."

That plan they found it easy to put into execution. They had meant to abandon their bicycles for the time being, at least, but now they realized what a mistake it would have been to do that, since with every normal activity cut off by the war, the machines were almost certain to be their only means of getting from one place to another, in the beginning at least.

Mounted on their bicycles, they now found their progress easy. The roads that led into Paris were crowded, to be sure. They passed countless automobiles carrying refugees. Already the Ameri-

cans were pouring out of Paris in their frantic haste to reach the coast and so take boat to England. On Saturday night automobiles were still allowed to leave Paris. Next morning there would be a different story to tell.

In Paris, when they began to enter the more crowded sections, they saw the same scenes as had greeted them in St. Denis, only on a vastly larger scale. Everywhere farewells were being said. Men in uniforms were all about. Officers, as soon as they were seen, were hailed by the drivers of taxicabs, who refused even to think of carrying a civilian passenger if an officer wanted to get anywhere, or, if there were no officers, a private soldier. The streets were crowded, however, and with men. Here there were thousands, of course, not required to report at once.

"When mobilization is ordered," explained Henri, "each man in France has a certain day on which he is to report at his depot. It may be the first day, the third, the fifth, the tenth. If all came at once it would mean too much confusion.

As it is, everything is done quickly and in order."

"It doesn't look it," was Frank's comment.

"No," said his chum, with a laugh. "That's true. But it's so, just the same. Every man you see knows just when he is to go, and when the time comes, off he will go. Why, even in your America, now, all the Frenchmen who have gone there are trying to get back. I know. They will be here as soon as the ships can bring them. They will report to the consul first—he will tell them what to do."

They made slow progress through the crowded streets. Already, however, there was a difference in the sort of crowding. There were fewer taxicabs, very many fewer. And there were no motor omnibuses at all.

"What has become of them?" asked Frank. "Aren't there men enough to run them?"

"Yes, and they are running them," said Henri, dryly. "But not in Paris. They are on their way to the border, perhaps. Wherever they are, they are carrying soldiers or supplies. The govern-

ment has always the right to take them all. Even at the time of the manoeuvres, some are taken, though not all. It is the same with the automobiles. In a few days there will be none left—the army will have them all. Officers need them to get around quickly. Generals cannot ride now—it is too slow to use a horse. You have heard of Leon Bollet?"

"No. Who is he?"

"He is a famous automobile driver in races. He has won the Grand Prix. He will drive a general. He is a soldier, like all Frenchmen, and that will be his task—to drive some great general wherever he wants to go."

That was how the meaning of mobilization really came home to Frank, who learned more from the things he missed that he was accustomed to seeing than from new sights. In the boulevards, for instance, where as a rule the little tables in front of the cafes would be crowded, all the tables had vanished. That was a result of what was happening. Everything brought the fact of war

home to him. To him it was even more vivid perhaps than to Henri, who had been brought up to know that some time all this would come about, and saw little that he had not been sure, some time, of seeing.

The crowds delayed them. Sometimes they had to dismount from their wheels and walk for a space, but in the end they came to their destination. Madame Martin, Henri's aunt, greeted him with delight.

"We were thinking of you, Henri!" she said. "Your uncle said to me only to-night, when we heard of the mobilization: 'And what of Henri? He cannot go home yet.' I knew you would come to us! And you have brought a friend? That is very well."

"Oh—an American!" she exclaimed, a moment later. "You have done well, my nephew."

"I'm half French," said Frank. Somehow he was beginning to feel very proud of that. These last few hours, that had shown him how France rallied in the face of a terrible and pressing danger

had made it easier for him to understand his mother's love of her own land. He was still an American above all; that he would always be. But there was French blood in his veins after all, and blood is something that is and always must be thicker than water.

So he had to explain himself, and when he spoke of the uncle who was to come for him Madame Martin looked concerned.

"I am glad that you are here," she said, simply. "It may be hard for him to get here. But we can look after you until he comes. There is room enough—and, ma foi, you shall have all that we have!"

CHAPTER IV

THE RECRUITS

August was drawing to its close. And still Henri and Frank were in Paris. Henri's father and his uncle had gone to the front; Frank's Uncle Dick, if he had tried to reach Paris or St. Denis, had not succeeded. Or if he had, he had been unable to get word to Frank. War in all its terrible reality was in full blast. Troops were passing through Paris still, going to the front. But they were older men now, the last classes of the reservists. Every night, too, the city was dark save for the searchlights that played incessantly from the high buildings and from the Eiffel Tower. For now there was a new menace. The Germans fought not on land alone, but in the air. At any time a German might appear, thousands of feet above the city, prepared to rain down death and destruction from the clouds.

Paris was quiet and resigned. Wounded men

were coming back; hospitals, from which floated the Red Cross flag, were everywhere. The hotels were sheltering the wounded; churches, theatres, all sorts of buildings not commonly so used were in the hands of the doctors and the nurses. There were few newspapers; there was neither paper on which to print them, nor men to run the great presses or write what they usually contained. All were gone; all except the old and the children. Hundreds of thousands of men were still in Paris, but they were the garrison of the city, the men who would man the forts if the Germans came.

And now, to get the news, Harry and Frank went to the places where the bulletins were posted, becoming a part of the silent crowds that waited. Every day they took their places in the crowds, to learn what they could and carry the tale back to Madame Martin. She was too busy to stand among the crowds herself; every day she was doing her part, helping in the nursing, and helping, too, to relieve the distress among the poor.

One day the two friends turned away. They

had seen the last bulletin; for some hours there would be no more news.

"I'm afraid it's not going well, Harry," said Frank.

"No," said Henri, almost with a sob in his voice. "It looks to me, too, as if the Germans were winning!"

"But many thought they would win, at first," said Frank. "It's not time to be discouraged yet, Harry. At first we all believed the Belgians were doing better than they could do—because they fought so well at Liege. Now Namur has fallen. And the English—they are falling back."

"Ah, well, that is so," said Henri, brightening a little. "We did not expect to fight in Belgium, we French. Wait till they try to enter France! We will stop them—at Lille, at Maubeuge, at Valenciennes!"

"I hope so, Harry," said Frank, soberly. "But do you know what I think? I believe we ought to go to your home at Amiens. I think you have been waiting here on my account—because you

thought my uncle was coming. Well, I think he couldn't come. I am better off with you. And perhaps I can help, too. I think you should go to your mother, if she is alone at Amiens, because—"

Henri turned on him fiercely.

"Do you mean you think the Germans can get to Amiens?" he cried furiously. "Never! Never! They will never come so far! They will be stopped long before they get near it!"

"I think so—and I hope so," said Frank. "But if my mother were there I should want to be there, too. I've read a great deal about war and battles lately, Harry, and I know that often an army has to retreat, not just because it's beaten, but because it's necessary for battles that are planned later on. The English and the French toward the coast are retreating now—on the left of the allies. They are moving back toward Amiens, and the Germans are following them."

Henri continued to argue bitterly against the possibility that Frank suggested, but his arguments grew weaker. And when he told his aunt

what Frank had said she sighed despairingly.

"I, too, have been thinking that," she said. "These are terrible times for our poor France. We shall win—everyone believes that. But we shall suffer greatly first. I have talked with General Broche—you know him, Henri. He is too old and weak to fight now, but he was active in 1870. And he says—he says that the government may move soon, away from Paris!"

"Then they think—!" cried Henri, almost overcome.

"They do not know—no one knows. But if there is to be another siege, it is better that the government should be where the Germans cannot bottle it up. I shall stay here, but I shall be safe. There are plenty to do what I need. Go to Amiens, Henri. Your place is near your mother. If there seems to be danger, beg her to come here, or even to go to her friends, the Douays, in Nice. There at least all will be safe."

Henri did not argue with his aunt. It was hard for him to realize the truth, as it was for French-

men older than himself. But he admitted it to Frank and even to himself, that night. And so the next morning they started for Amiens. An officer, returning to the front after bringing despatches to Paris, agreed to see that they reached the northern city safely. Without him, indeed, they would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to get aboard a train, for while other railways were open those that led to the front were entirely in the hands of the military authorities.

But thanks to the friendly officer, a friend of the Martin family in Paris, they reached Amiens quickly enough. On the way, more than once they passed long trains carrying wounded, and, several times, other trains on which were packed German prisoners. These, under close guard, looked out sullenly from the windows. The sight delighted Henri.

"That doesn't look much as if we were losing, does it?" he cried happily.

Amiens itself was a smaller Paris. In times of peace, Amiens is, like many other French cities,

a curious place, owing to the contrast between its character as a busy, bustling, manufacturing town, and its other character as a place where there are many renowned examples of ancient art. But now it was quiet save for the ever present soldier. Troops were passing through the streets; in the station several hundred were entraining.

"Do soldiers go from here, too?" asked Frank.

"Yes. Amiens is the headquarters of the second army corps," explained Harry. "All the reservists of that corps report here, no matter where they live. When a regiment loses a lot of men, if it is in the second corps, new men from here go forward to fill their places. There is no sign of the Prussians, eh?"

"No," said Frank. "I hope there never will be! But, tell me, would they fight here? Are there fortifications?"

"Not new ones—no," said Harry. He pointed to the old citadel crowning one of the hills that commanded the town and the crooked, twisting course of the Somme river. "There is the old

citadel. That still stands. But the ancient battlements have been dismantled. I believe that in time of war, if the enemy got past the troops in the field, they could come peacefully into Amiens. It is not a fortress, like Lille or Maubeuge. Oh, look, there are some of the scouts! I see Monsieur Marron. He is the directeur of the troop—the scoutmaster. Let us speak to him."

They went over to a tall man in khaki, who was speaking to an officer in the red and blue uniform of the French army. Henri saluted, and when the officer went away, the scoutmaster turned to him with a smile.

"Well—so you are here, Martin!" he said. "Are you going to join? We will waive formalities—we need all the scouts we can get."

"Yes, sir, and I have brought a recruit. He is half French—the rest of him is American. But he wants to join, too. May he?"

"Certainly," said the scoutmaster. "Report to-night or in the morning. Get your uniforms. Who is your recruit?"

Frank was introduced, and the tall Frenchman shook hands with him.

"You will be welcome," he said. "My boys are at work, you see. They are serving as messengers. There has been plenty for us to do in these days, too. Pray God there may not be more —and of a less pleasant sort."

Frank observed the French scouts with interest. They were in khaki uniforms, with wool stockings, and short trousers that stopped just above the knee, and the soft campaign hats made famous by the pioneer scouts in England. Indeed, they looked like the English and American scouts in many respects.

"One moment," said Marron, checked by a sudden thought. "You speak French well?" He asked the question of Frank, who smiled.

"Yes, sir," he said, in French. "My mother was French, you see."

"That is very good," said the scoutmaster. "Never fear, I shall be able to keep you busy as long as I am here. Soon, I hope, they will let me

go to the front, where I should be right now."

"I thought you would have gone, sir," said Henri.

"They wanted me to stay with my boys at the first," said Marron, with a shrug of his shoulders. "But they can do their work alone now, and there is no fear that they will not do it well."

Then Frank and Henri went off, on their way to Henri's house.

"So we have come to Amiens after all and we are to join the Boy Scouts, just as we planned that day when I said there would be no war this year!"

"Yes—but it's different, isn't it, Henri?"

"Yes, and we can be of some real use now."

"I am glad that we are here, aren't you? When we get our uniforms and go to work, I shall feel that we are really being used in the war. I—I'm an American, of course, but I've hated the idea that I was so close to this war and wasn't having anything to do with it."

"And I—I have been wishing, Frank, that they might have waited until I was old enough to fight for France!"

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST DUTY

Morning brought awakening to the two friends with the sounding of reveille from bugles, seemingly just outside their window. Together they sprang from bed, raced to the window, wide open as it had been all night, and looked out. Not far away, in a small park, one of those for which the city of Amiens is famous, they saw an array of white tents that they had not seen the night before when they had gone to bed. Already the camp was stirring; even as they watched the soldiers were all about. And early as it was, they saw a scout ride up on a bicycle, speak to the sentry who challenged him, and wait. In a moment an officer came out, the scout saluted, and his salute was returned as stiffly and gravely as it had been given. Then the scout handed the officer a letter, saluted again and, receiving permission, turned away and vaulted on his wheel.

Henri was vastly excited.

"Come on!" he cried eagerly. "Let's get dressed, Frank. I see that we should be out already."

"Yes. It's time we were getting busy if the others are at work," said Frank. "Where do you suppose those chaps came from?"

"I don't know—that's exactly what's puzzling me," said Henri, his brow knitted. "They don't look like reserve troops. I don't know exactly why, either, but we can soon find out."

They bathed and dressed hurriedly, and went down to find that Marie, the cook who had been with the Martin family ever since Henri could remember, was ready to give them their breakfast. In a time when many families for reasons of economy were allowing their servants to go, Henri's mother had kept all of hers.

"Now, more than ever," she said, "they need the work and the wages. It is a time for those who can possibly afford it to engage more servants, rather than to discharge those

they have already in their employ and service."

Madame Martin, who, like Henri's aunt in Paris, was busy all day long in helping the wounded, doing voluntary duty in the Red Cross hospital to which she had been assigned, was not yet up. She had greeted the two boys on their arrival the previous evening, but had left the house immediately after dinner, since it was her turn to do some night work.

"She is wearing herself out," complained old Marie. "A fine lady like her dressing the wounds of piou-pious, indeed!"

Frank laughed. He knew by this time what piou-piou meant. It is the endearing term of the French for the little red-trousered soldiers who form the armies of the republic, just as the English call a soldier Tommy Atkins.

"It is for France," said Henri, gravely. "I shall perhaps be a piou-piou myself before so very long, Marie."

"You will be an officer, will you not?" exclaimed Marie.

"It may be. I do not know," said Henri. "But the best and the greatest men in France, those who govern us and write books and plays, and paint pictures, and make fine statues, are in the ranks to-day. It is a privilege even for my mother to nurse them."

"All very well—but I won't have her getting all tired out," grumbled Marie. "Your father told me himself, when he went off, to look after her. And I'm going to do it."

"Where did the soldiers who are in the park come from?" asked Henri, changing the subject.

"Who knows? They come, they stay a few hours or a day, then they go, and others take their places! More soldiers have been in Amiens than I knew were in the world! We had some English—strange, mad men, who wore dresses to their knees and had music that sounded like a dozen cats fighting at night on a back yard fence."

Both the boys laughed at this description of the kilted Highlanders with their bagpipes, but they exchanged meaning glances. Paris did not know

where the English troops were; barely knew that some had crossed the channel, and had landed in France. How many had come no one knew except those who would not tell. All that was announced was that England had sent help to her ally, and that English troops were again, as on so many occasions in the past, on French soil. But this time they came as friends, not as the enemies that Marlborough and Wellington had led.

"Well, we'll soon know, even if she can't tell us," said Henri. And as soon as they had had their breakfast, they slipped around to the kitchen. Henri and Frank both laughed, for they surprised half a dozen blushing, awkward infantrymen, who were receiving hot coffee and rolls —fare of a different sort from that afforded by the camp kitchens.

"Welcome, welcome!" said Henri. "My father is with his regiment, or he would speak, so I speak for him. Of what regiment are you, my friends?"

One of them mentioned its number, and Henri exclaimed in his surprise.

"But you are of the Nancy corps—the twentieth!" he cried. "You were fighting in Lorraine! Were you not among those who captured Mulhouse?"

"Yes." The soldier's face grew dark. "Ah, you are right! Of a truth we captured Mulhouse! How the Uhlans ran! We beat them there, and we were chasing them. Ah, the delight of that! There we were, in Alsace! The lost province! For the first time in forty-four years it saw French uniforms. For the first time since 1870 it was free from the Germans. The people sang and cheered as we went into the villages. They brought us food. The young women spread flowers before us. And then—we came back. We were not beaten! We had orders to recross the border. And we were put on trains and brought here. The shame of it!"

"But you came?"

"Soldiers must obey! But even our officers, I can tell you, did not like it!"

"Sometimes an army must retreat to fight

better somewhere else," said Henri in defense.

"But here? At Amiens? There are no Prussians here!"

"Perhaps they are not so far away. One hears —they were in Brussels a week ago—they are pouring toward the border—perhaps they have passed it. It may be that there is a battle to be fought here in France."

"Oh, well, if there is a battle to be fought, that is different again. That is what we want. In Alsace there were no battles. They ran as soon as they saw our uniforms—the pigs of Prussians!"

"Good luck to you, then! May you beat a thousand of them!"

"We shall! Never fear! I will bring you a pretzel from Berlin when we come back in exchange for your good rolls!"

Laughing again, Frank and Henri went out.

"That fellow is like the French soldiers I've read about," said Frank, much interested.

"Yes. He is the sort who fights well, but does not think. But, Frank, I begin to think you were

right. If they give up the fight in Alsace to reenforce the army here, the Germans must be winning."

"Perhaps not. It may be only for the time."

"Yet it looks serious. Listen! Can you hear the sound of guns?"

Henri said that as a jest. But Frank listened—he took him seriously.

"Not yet," he said.

"Nor ever shall—from here!" exclaimed Henri. "I did not mean that! They will be held on the border."

Yet, even as he spoke, though he did not know it, the Germans, victors at the great battle of Mons-Charleroi, were driving the left wing of the allied army remorselessly, steadily back through the fertile fields of Champagne, where bullets were tearing the laden grapevines to pieces. The Uhlans were riding along the coast. Forced back by the defeat of the left, the centre was yielding. It was well that they did not know then what was in store; that they could not foresee the coming days

when the Germans seemed to be the sure victors.

As they talked, Frank and Henri were making their way to the place where M. Marron, the scoutmaster, had told them to report. He was there, listening to reports and giving orders when they arrived. They had provided themselves the night before with uniforms, and now they were true scouts in appearance save that they did not wear the badge. They waited until he was ready to speak to them.

"You know the scout law?" he asked them, briefly.

Together they recited it.

"In war," he said, "rules may be forgotten. There are other tests, but these I shall not impose. Recite after me the scout oath It binds you to be faithful, to be honorable. You are to obey the ten points of the scout law. And now that war has come, you are to obey all orders from officers of the army as you would those of your scoutmaster. If I go—and that may be to-day—you will obey the leader of the third patrol, to which you are

assigned, as you would me. If things so come about that you can get orders from no one you will still do all you can for France."

Then he repeated in French the scout oath, and they said it after him.

"Now you are scouts," said Marron. He pinned badges on their sleeves. "Wear this always. Remember that it typifies your honor."

He raised three fingers in the scout salute; they returned it.

"That is well," he said, then. "Now for your first duty, you will accompany other scouts, to see how they perform their work. When you have done that for a little while, you may be trusted with independent commissions."

All morning, first with other scouts, and then alone, they did errands of one sort and another. After a brief rest for a hurried noonday meal, M. Marron gave them new orders.

"Here is a list of houses," he said. "Soon a train will arrive with refugees from districts where the Germans are. You will take these refu-

gees around with you, in parties of twenty-five, with two scouts to a party, until all are cared for. The owners of the houses on your list have agreed to give these poor people food and shelter until they can safely return to their homes. Treat them kindly and chivalrously. Remember that though they may not have fought, they have suffered for the fatherland! You understand?''

They saluted, and were off.

CHAPTER VI

TO THE FRONT

There was real news to be gleaned from these unfortunates who came into the station at Amiens soon after the boys took their places there with some of the other scouts of the troop. Women, children and old men—not a young man was among them, of course—they poured from the freight cars that in the main they occupied. And they were willing to talk; more than willing, indeed. They told of how the Germans had come. First the Uhlans riding through, stern and silent, willing to leave the inhabitants alone, as a rule, if they themselves were let alone. Then the infantry, rolling along in great grey masses. And with them came the spoiling of the countryside.

"They took everything—food, wine, everything our army had not had," said one woman to Frank and Henri, as she walked through the streets with them. Frank was carrying her baby for her.

"They left us with nothing! And then they burned all the houses in my street because, they said, there must be clear space for their guns to fire!"

It was a simple matter to distribute these poor refugees. The town of Amiens had troubles of its own but it forgot them now, and set itself doggedly to work the relief of the far more acute distress of those from the countryside to the north and east. Always the stories of those who had fled before the German hosts were the same.

"The Germans haven't got an army!" cried Henri, bitterly. "It's a war machine they send against us! They do not fight like men, but like railroad trains!"

They were learning more in this task of escorting the refugees than all the bulletins had been able to tell them. No censors could close the mouths of these poor people, and they were not only willing to talk—they craved listeners.

"It makes it easier to bear what we have suffered when we know that others know what the

Germans have done," said the woman with the baby. "We women—we gave our husbands, and those who had sons gave their sons. Now we have given all to France. Let the men win back enough for us to live—that is all that we ask."

They did not know the meaning of the military movements they had seen. Indeed, they had not seen military movements in the strict sense of the word. All they knew was that soldiers, first in one uniform, then in another, had passed through their villages, first going north and east, then south and west. They had heard firing, dim and in the distance at first, but coming always nearer. Then the tide of battle had rolled by. That was all they knew.

But to boys who from the beginning of the war had followed every move on the great chessboard of the struggle, these things meant knowledge for which the editors of newspapers would have given fortunes. In Paris they had had a great map, and every day they had shifted the tiny flags that showed where the troops were. They had flags for

each of the allies and for the Austrians and Germans at first. Later they had become more particular. They had worked out as well as they could the different armies, even to the army corps, and had marked their flags accordingly. And so this exact knowledge of where troops of particular commands had been, made it possible for them, when there was time for them to go home, to make changes in the positions of the little flags that dotted their map.

When they had finished doing that they looked at one another.

"The French and the English are retreating," said Henri, soberly. "You were right, Frank. They fought on the line of Mons to Charleroi in Belgium, and then they began running away."

"Not exactly that, either," said Frank. "Look here—look at the map, Henri. There is Paris. There is a great army there under General Gallieni. There are enormous fortifications. That is the great base. There is this line with three fortresses—Rheims, La Fere, Laon, with other forts

between them. That backed the centre when the French army retired from the border. But there is another army on the left of that line—because, if the Germans get around the left, behind that line of fortresses, they could be surrounded."

"But they could be defended—"

"Yes, as Bazaine defended Metz—until he was starved out," said Frank. He was beginning to be excited. "I think I see what may happen, Harry. The German right is moving out, always—far out, toward the sea. It wants to get around our left, and cut it off. If it gets between our left and Paris, there will be a disaster—another Sedan, perhaps. That is why there is a retreat. It is necessary. We are not ready to fight yet. But wait!"

"Wait! Wait? Is that the thing for French soldiers to do? That is not how Napoleon won his battles! He struck—and he struck first!"

"Never until he was sure of victory."

"But if they keep on retreating, they will be south of here! The Germans can take Amiens,

if they like!" exclaimed Harry in much alarm.

"What of it? It will be sad for Amiens, but it will do the Germans no good. Amiens has no strategic value. Less than Rheims or Laon—and we know now that the Germans have them both, though that has not been in the bulletins."

"Then why are troops going south? The troops from here?"

"We don't know where they are going, Henri. They start south but perhaps they turn, and go to re-enforce the centre. Don't you suppose our generals have their plans, too? You spoke of Napoleon. Don't you remember the march to Moscow? How the Russians retreated, always, and drew him on? And what happened then, when they were ready to fight?"

Frank had awakened a memory terrible for any Frenchman But there was no more time for argument. The telephone rang out sharply and Henri went to answer it. M. Marron was on the wire. When Henri returned his eyes were shining.

"We are wanted. Perhaps it is for real work,"

he said, happily. "He wanted to know if we could both speak English—if I could, that is. None of the other scouts can do that, he says, and so we are to report at once. Oh, I wonder what can be wanted?"

"Well, the best way to find out is to go and see," said Frank, practically.

M. Marron was ready for them when they reached him. He was no longer in his khaki scoutmaster's garb, but in his uniform of captain of the line.

"You are to report to Colonel Menier," he said, briefly. "I do not know what service is required of you. I can only say to you, do your best. My orders have come. I join my regiment to-day. From this moment the troop of Boy Scouts of Amiens has no organization, until such time as it can be restored. Each scout must act for himself, taking his orders whenever it is possible from officers of the army. When he has no such orders he must use his own best judgment. Before you report to Colonel Menier you are to wait here—I

intend to address all the scouts of the troop."

They had not long to wait before the other scouts arrived. At the sight of the scoutmaster in his uniform they cheered him heartily.

"Scouts!" he said, speaking in French, when all were there. "I leave you now, for the fatherland has called me to its service in ways different from those to which I have been assigned so far. I leave you free to your own devices. But you are free only in name. You are bound by your scout oath, by your scout law. You are bound by those principles of honor which the scouts teach and enforce. Never forget them!

"While you are still boys, before it is time for France to call you to the army, the enemy thunders at our gates. In our millions we have risen to repel them, to drive the iron heel of the invader from France, France the beautiful, the loved of all! It is for you, as for all who are worthy of the name of Frenchmen, to help in that great work, to make sacrifices, to do your part.

"But your part gives you no right to fight. You

are to bear no arms. That does not mean you have no service to render to your native land; that France does not ask anything of you. She asks much; she expects much from the Boy Scouts.

"It may be you can do most by quietly filling the place made vacant in your home — made vacant by father or older brother gone to serve in the ranks. It may be your privilege to aid in caring for the wounded as they come back to their homes from the scene of conflict. It may be you will find a place to help on the battlefields. But wherever you are, whatever you do, remember that Scouts are ever faithful, ever loyal, ever true to the trust reposed in them.

"It is cowardly to shirk a duty. Perform your part in the struggle as becomes true Scouts—as becomes men who have been born and reared in our fair France.

"Mark my word well. So, if I am spared to return to you, after the war, I shall meet all of you again, and I shall be able to grasp the hand of each one of you, and say: 'Well done! You have

deserved well, you of France and of the Boy Scouts Francais!' "

His sword flashed from his scabbard, and he held it stiffly to the salute. Then sheathing it, he turned and stamped from the room. He went with a high head and a happy heart to the service of the land he loved—as millions of Frenchmen had gone or would go.

There was silence when he had gone. Quietly the scouts melted away to the tasks they had in hand. The words of their departing leader had made a great impression on them. Nor had his reminder of what they should and should not do against the Germans been unnecessary.

"I suppose he must be right," said Henri, a little wistfully. "I shall obey. But I had hoped that I might have a shot at a few Germans! Frank, I have practiced so often with my rifle! I have killed hawks and rabbits—"

"Let's find Colonel Menier," said Frank. "We can hurt the Germans far more, I expect, by obeying orders than by killing a few. It is not

the killing of a few men that will settle this war, Henri! War is bad—war is terrible. Let us not make it worse."

Then they went to the barracks, inquiring, as they had been told to do, for Colonel Menier. Soon they were brought to him, a busy, tired looking officer of the staff. He eyed them keenly.

CHAPTER VII

THE GLORY OF WAR

One glance at Henri seemed to satisfy him. The French boy, so typical of his race, he was ready to take for granted. He asked just one question.

"You speak English well? You can understand thoroughly?"

"Yes, my colonel," answered Henri.

Then the officer turned to Frank.

"You are English—one of our allies?" he asked.

"No, sir." And Frank had to explain, for the hundredth time since the war began, as it seemed to him, his nationality and his mixed blood. He threw up his head a little proudly now as he told of his French mother.

"That is well enough," said the colonel. "You are neutral—in America. But I think—ah, yes, I believe that you Americans remember Lafayette and the help you had from Frenchmen once."

"I am ready to do what I can for France, colonel," said Frank, simply. "That is all I can say."

"Or I, or any of us," said Colonel Menier. "Listen well, then. I shall tell you things that no one else is to know. You, Martin, know the country here? You can find your way about?"

"Yes, my colonel."

"I want you to take certain messages for me to the English headquarters. Where it is to-day, I know. It is here—see, on the map?"

They looked at the spot he indicated, and concealed their surprise. They had supposed the English much nearer the border.

"Where it may be to-morrow I cannot tell. But it is of the greatest importance that the papers I give you be delivered at headquarters. It is so important that we will not trust them to the telephone, to the telegraph, to the field wireless. They are reports of the most confidential nature, having to do with movements that will be of great importance a few days from now. You will not wear

your uniforms of Boy Scouts for the work in hand."

Neither of them said anything.

"That, you will understand, is because the uniforms would make you more than ever conspicuous to the Germans. I do not think you will be anywhere near the Uhlans. But in war one must not think; or, if one does, one must think of all things that may happen. So you will wear your ordinary clothes. You have one day, two days, three, if necessary, to find the British headquarters. No more. These papers are written on the thinnest of paper. It is so thin that the messages are contained in these marbles that I give you — one to each of you."

They took the marbles and still they made no comment.

"If you are captured and searched, I believe you will have very little to fear. It is not likely that a German officer, no matter how zealous he may be, will be over-suspicious of a lot of marbles in a boy's pocket. You will have a pocket full of them, and they will all look alike.

And if the Germans find you are only boys moved by the curiosity of boys to see battle-fields, they will not hurt you. I do not believe they will even hold you. Probably they will not even take your marbles away from you, thinking them harmless playthings, never once dreaming of their secret. Only the officer at our headquarters who knows of your coming will be able to distinguish one marble from another. How he will do so, it is better that you should not know."

"Someone then will know that we are coming, my colonel?" said Henri, a smile brightening his face.

"Evidently. When you reach the British lines, you will be challenged, probably arrested and detained. Say to the soldier that he is to give a word to his officer — Mezieres. That will insure your being taken to headquarters. Everywhere, all through the field, the giving of that word will mean that he who gives it is to be taken at once to the nearest staff officer."

"Mezieres. We will remember, my colonel," said Henri. "We will change into our ordinary clothes and start at once. On our return we report to you here?"

Colonel Menier smiled sadly.

"When you return there will be no French troops in Amiens, I fear," he said. "Indeed, I know it. The time to stop and turn to fight is not yet. We shall not play into the hands of the Germans by fighting on their chosen ground. We shall wait until we are ready. This is not 1870 when armies were thrown away rather than retreat to ground where the chances of victory were even, at the worst. Remember that, if you think the retreat is shameful. If, in 1870, the army of Chalons had retreated upon Paris, instead of marching to the trap at Sedan, French history might well be different."

"Then Amiens is to be evacuated, my colonel?"

"It is the order. When you have done your errand, return here or do whatever the British staff may require of you. It will not be for long

that Amiens shall be deserted. We shall return But whether I shall be here then, I do not know. Farewell! Obey the orders I have given you, and you will deserve well of France."

They saluted then and went to make their preparations for the start.

"Harry," said Frank, "if the Germans are coming to Amiens, your mother must go. She should be where she will be safe."

"You are right, Frank. We will try to persuade her to go. But will she leave her task with the wounded?"

"She can take it up elsewhere."

But though they had expected to have difficulty in persuading her, they found that Madame Martin was already making plans to go.

"The wounded are to be taken to Tours in great numbers," she told them. "They will need nurses there, and I shall go. Henri, will you and Francois come with me?"

"We cannot," said Henri. "There is work for us to do. You would want me to do my share?"

"Of course I do!" she said, her eyes filling with tears. "And so speaks every mother in France to-day! Stay, then, and serve your land in whatever way you can, for France needs even the boys now. Remember, Henri, that somewhere your mother is serving too, and she expects her son to do his whole duty. More, she *knows* he will do it." And her face glowed with pride in her son as she clasped his hand in her own.

"I will remember," said Henri.

Then they went to their room, laid away their newly acquired uniforms of Boy Scouts, and, keeping not even their new badges of which they had been so proud, especially Henri, dressed in their ordinary clothes.

"Let's start on bicycles, anyhow," proposed Frank. "We may not be able to stick to them, but we can save a lot of time on our way to Le Cateau. That's where we shall go first, isn't it?"

"Yes. We had better start for there. You're right about the bicycles, too. Even if we lose

them, that does not matter so much," said Harry.

"And, Harry, we've got to pretend to be pretty stupid, if we are caught. You mustn't act as if you knew too much. Don't let the Germans see how you really feel about them. Pretend to be terribly frightened, even if you're not," instructed Frank.

"All right. I see what you mean. Come on, then. Let's be off!"

Already, as they rode through the streets of Amiens, the signs of what was to come were multiplying. Troops were marching out of the town, but they were going south, away from the battle line, it seemed. And the townspeople were not slow in taking the hint. They were gathering such things as they could carry with them, and all those with anything of real value, and with a place to take it, were preparing to get away before the coming of the Germans. The refugees from Belgium had told them lurid tales of the German treatment of captured places; they had no mind to share the fate of their unhappy neigh-

bors in the plucky little country to the north. And so the exodus was beginning.

Henri was very much depressed.

"And this is war!" he said, sadly. "So far, except for the wounded, we have seen only the suffering of women and children. Where is the glory of war of which history tells? I want to see some fighting! I want to know that we are really resisting the invaders of the fatherland."

"You'll know it soon enough," said Frank, with a smile. "You are too impatient, Harry. And you must remember this. While all this is going on, Russia is advancing too. The Austrians have been well beaten all along their front already. Soon it will be the turn of the Germans to meet Russia. They cannot long devote all their energy to France and the British."

"That is so, Frank. But the Russians won't fight here."

"Perhaps not. But it will be the same. For every army corps that Russia sends into Prussia means that Germany can spare so many troops

less for the war on this side. Harry, do you know what I think? I think Germany is beaten already!"

"How can you say that, Frank? We know now that they have pushed us back everywhere—that they are all over Belgium, and are marching on Paris, just as they did the last time—"

"No, not just as they did the last time, Harry. For then they marched on Paris with the field armies of France beaten—one of them captured, the other locked up in Metz. Now the armies of France are still in the field. And I say that Germany is beaten because her one chance in this war was to destroy France as she did in 1870—quickly. If she had done that, she might have been able to turn back, away from France, and meet Russia with her full strength."

"Oh, I see what you mean. But I'll feel better when we turn and fight, instead of running away from them."

"So will I and everyone else, Harry. But the great thing for our side now is to win delay.

Every day is as important as a battle. Russia moves slowly, but when she is fully in the field she will have as great an army ready as France and Germany together."

"Well, I hope you are right. Ah, now we are out of the town. We can go a little faster. En avant!"

In the fields women and young boys were working hard, getting in the harvest that the men had abandoned. Never had a countryside looked more peaceful, except that at every bridge they passed now was a sentry, usually a man of the reserve, held back from the front for this sort of duty, while the younger men were at the front to do the actual fighting.

For a long time they were not challenged. The sentries looked at them idly, but decided that they were not at all likely to be Prussian spies, and let them pass. But when they came to the railroad line leading from Amiens to Arras, which they had to cross, it was different. Their crossing was at a culvert, where the road passed under the

tracks. Here there was not one sentry, but a post, under the command of a one-legged veteran.

To him they were forced to make explanations, which he received gravely, studying Frank with particular attention.

"So you carry despatches," he said. "You have a word, a countersign, perhaps?"

"Mezieres," said Henri, promptly.

"Very well. Pass, then, but keep an eye open. There were Uhlans here before daybreak."

"Here?"

"They are beginning to show now. We hear they were in Arras yesterday. Some stayed with us. They sought to blow up the culvert here."

Then they went on. And just after they had passed the post, they saw what the crippled veteran had meant when he had said that some of the Uhlans had stayed. They lay beside the road, in their greenish gray uniforms. They were the first German soldiers either of the boys had seen. And, in the field, two old peasants were digging a grave.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HANDS OF A CLOCK

The sight was a sobering one. There had been only half a dozen of the Uhlans, and they knew from what they had heard and read that thousands, scores of thousands probably, had already died in the war. But they hadn't seen the others, and these men had lain by the roadside within a few feet of them. For a time neither of the two scouts had much to say.

"There's some real war for you, Henri," Frank said, finally.

"Don't!" said the French scout with a shudder. "It must be, but it is terrible. And only a few hours ago, I suppose, they were riding along as well as you and I!"

Then for a mile or more they rode along in silence. They made good time for the roads were level. There were no interruptions to their progress now. In the fields, as before, they could see

the women and a few old men about the work of the harvest, but in spite of that, there was an air of desolation. Everything seemed to have stopped. And there was a curious something that made itself felt. For a long time, though each of them felt this, they made no comment on it. Finally Frank called a halt.

"Listen, Harry," he said. "There's something curious. It's a noise, and yet it isn't, exactly. It sounds a little like thunder or like the surf when you are quite a little way inland—"

They stopped together, listening.

"I know!" said Henri, suddenly. "It's the guns we hear. The wind is changing and that is why it is coming to us now. There is a battle. In olden days we could see its smoke but now they fight without making smoke. And the noise, too, seems to come from the direction in which we are going."

Once he had named the cause, there was no mystery about the sound. It was less a sound, however, than a beating of the air. There were no

sharp reports; it was a steady, ceaseless murmur. But even so, there was no mistaking it. For the first time they were within hearing distance of a battle.

"We will soon be on our way to Berlin, now," said Henri. "That must mean that we have turned—that the great battle has begun."

"It needn't mean that," said Frank. "It may be only artillery covering a rear guard action. I wish you'd remember, Harry, that a retreat may mean mighty hard fighting. Not a rout—a retreat. It isn't easy for an army to move backward. But it's been done by a good many armies that won later."

"Well, come on! We're not getting any nearer to the English by stopping here to talk."

"No. We'll be off again. That noise is getting nearer, Harry. Or louder, anyhow. Perhaps that only means that more guns are going into action."

Somehow the nearness of the battle stimulated them. They found themselves making better time,

though they had certainly seemed to be riding as fast as they could before. And all the time the sound of the cannon in front of them grew louder, and the quality of the noise gradually changed. Soon loud explosions began to be distinguishable amid the general hum of battle, and, too, there was an overtone,—a sharper, less steady noise.

"Rifle fire, I think, too," said Frank. "It's lighter than the sound of the cannon, but it seems to be just about as steady. And to think that that's going on, all the way from here to the Swiss border nearly! They're fighting here and near Verdun, and in the Vosges mountains."

"Look over there," said Henri, suddenly. "Do you see? That looks like an omnibus!"

"It is—one of the sort they use in London!" said Frank, in surprise.

The great, unwieldy vehicle came lumbering toward them. It rolled along the road, raising a tremendous cloud of dust, and they could see that behind it were many more. Just behind it, too, a man on a motorcycle came suddenly into view.

He was mounted on a high-powered machine, and they could hear the roar of his motor as he came up to them.

"Halte!" he cried, in a broken French. "Arretez vous!"

They were off their machines in a moment, saluting, as he stopped his motor and put one foot on the ground to steady his machine. He was dressed in khaki, and both of them recognized his uniform as that of the British forces.

"We speak English," said Frank.

"The deuce you do! That's good! Well, tell me how to get to Guise. We've lost our blooming way, that's what we've done! And we've got supplies for the troops."

"You're going the wrong way—straight to Amiens," said Henri. "The road to Guise is back four miles, at least. Can you turn your 'buses here? We will guide you. We are going that way."

"You are, are you?" said the English officer. He laughed, curtly. "I doubt that, young fellow!

I do, indeed! However, you can come along with us as far as that. Then I'll wash my hands of you. But I can tell you that if you go on much further, you'll get into some fighting that isn't meant for boys!"

They made no reply, for as they understood their errand, they were not supposed to tell every officer they met what they were doing, but were to answer questions only when it was plain that not to do so meant that they would be prevented from reaching their destination.

It was not the easiest of tasks to manage the reversing of the supply train of omnibuses, but the officer in charge was efficient, and it was managed. When the convoy had turned around, he rode up beside the boys.

"Seen any signs of Germans?" he asked.

"Only at a culvert a few miles back," said Frank. He described the fight there as best he could, and the officer looked a little worried.

"As far as that, eh?" he said. "We hadn't heard of their being in that quarter at all. H'm!"

Then he rode on ahead, to what had, until a few moments before, been the rear of his train.

"He's doing well enough, now that he knows his way," said Frank in an undertone to Henri. "But I think he was in a bad way. I've got an idea that the Germans are behind us. Do you know what I think? It's funny for a supply train like this to be here without any escort of troops, isn't it?"

"Yes. I thought of that, too."

"Well, I believe he was supposed to meet a guard, and missed it. Suppose he'd run into the Germans?"

"Yes, that would have been a nice mess! I suppose some English soldiers would have gone hungry to-night!"

The road was rising a little, enough for them to feel the added pull in propelling their wheels. And now, at the crest of the little rise, they saw that the officer had dismounted. He had unstrapped a box from his machine and was setting it up. In a few minutes, as they reached him, he

had set up a tripod-like machine, not unlike a surveyor's instrument, and was flashing a small mirror.

"Hello!" he said. "Field heliograph kit. Ever see it before?"

"No, sir, but I know about it," said Frank, while Henri looked on admiringly. "I know the Morse code, too."

"Do you? Good! Then watch those answering flashes. Check off the message for me."

Harry obeyed, having spotted in that moment the answer of a similar instrument on a hill perhaps five miles away. He read off the Morse signs carefully, and the officer nodded.

"And that's all right," he said, with a sigh of relief. "They'll have an escort here for us as quickly as it can ride over. I suppose you know I signalled for that?"

"Yes, sir."

The officer was plainly puzzled by Frank and Henri. He could not quite understand what they were doing in what was decidedly disputed

ground. But he had not the instinct that would have prompted a French, and more especially, a German officer, to question them and, if he was not fully satisfied, to put them under restraint.

"All right. We'll be getting on," he said. "Ride along, now. I'm going back. Don't get out of touch. And if I'm not around when we get to the road where we are to turn off for Guise, stop them. They know you're guiding us."

He went off, with a great sputtering of his engine, and Frank and Harry rode along quietly. But Frank felt a strange uneasiness.

"I feel as if there was something wrong around here," he said.

"What do you mean, Frank? Everything's quiet now. Even the firing is not as heavy as it was."

"I know, but just the same, that's how I feel. As if there was something in the air. What's this —a village we're coming to?"

"Yes, and the crossroads where the 'buses must turn, for Guise is just beyond here, too."

"Doesn't look much like war, does it?" said Frank. "Look at that church. I suppose it's been there for centuries. But the clock looks new, doesn't it?"

"Yes, and it's stopped, too," said Henri, with a laugh. "I suppose they are so excited about the war that they've forgotten to wind it properly."

"The time of day doesn't matter much just now," said Frank. "I think—" He stopped short, staring as if fascinated at the clock. Then with a cry to Henri to wait for him, he turned and pedalled furiously back in the direction the officer had taken.

"Who is the commander?" he called to the soldier driver of one of the 'buses.

"Capting 'Ardy," replied the man.

"Thanks," Frank called, and went on as fast as he could. He met Captain Hardy coming toward him. Swiftly he told him what he had seen, and Hardy, tugging at his revolver, sped on. Frank followed but was left far behind, naturally, by the speed of the motorcycle. When he reached the

church he looked up at the clock again. Captain Hardy's motorcycle was lying in the street, and Henri was staring at the church door greatly puzzled.

"What is the matter?" cried Henri. "The officer came back, jumped off his machine and tore into the church as if his life depended on it. He was pulling out his pistol, too. What—"

The sharp bark of a revolver interrupted him. It spoke three times and there was a cry from above. They looked up, to see the figure of a man dropping from the opening of the clock. A moment later Captain Hardy came down, reloading his revolver.

"Good work, youngster!" he said. "Your eyes were sharp that time! If you hadn't seen the hands of that clock moving we might have been caught in a nice trap! Wait here—I'm going to make a barricade of the omnibuses."

"What does he mean?" cried Henri, almost frantic with curiosity.

"Why, I saw that the hands of the clock had

moved! You said it had stopped, and I looked up. Then the next time I looked, the hands had moved around—two or three hours!"

"But how—and why—if the clock had stopped?"

"That's just it! That clock must be visible for some distance around, Harry. Suppose a German was there? He could be signalling, couldn't he?"

"Oh, a spy! I never thought of that! You mean he would tell other Germans to come here—that there was work for them to do?"

"Yes. I only hope Captain Hardy stopped him in time."

But Hardy was taking no more chances than he could help. He had guessed as quickly as Frank the probable reason for the strange antics of the clock's face. And now he made his dispositions quickly. Counting the armed drivers of each omnibus, and the extra man each carried, he had less than thirty men. But he drew up several of the omnibuses in a square formation in the central

square of the village, and thus had an improvised fort. When he had done that he called sharply to the two boys.

"Get along with you—get away from here!" he said. "If we're going to have a fight it's no place for you. You've done us a mighty good turn—I don't want you running into danger because of it."

Even as he spoke a shot rang out. It was from the direction in which they had come!

"Just in time, too," he said, coolly.

A soldier came up to report.

"Uhlans, sir—a sight of them, too. Coming from the road we were taking. I think we got one of them, sir. Toppled him off his horse, anyhow, sir."

"All right. Let them come," said Captain Hardy. "Go along now, boys. If you see the cavalry sent to escort us, tell them to hurry! We'll try to beat them off until we get help."

He turned away, and Frank picked up his wheel.

CHAPTER IX

A GLIMPSE OF THE ENEMY

Other ears than theirs had heard that firing, too. As they rode along they saw a cloud of dust before them, and soon men and horses emerged from the dust.

"Let's hide in the hedge along the road," said Frank. "Come on—they'll never see us."

"But they won't hurt us, Frank. They're English—our friends."

"Probably they are. But how do we know? They may be more Germans."

"Oh, I never thought of that! If they are—"

"Yes, if they are, it's good-bye to Captain Hardy and his supplies. But we can't help it. We've already done all we could for him."

They watched the oncoming cavalry, but even at a little distance, what with their speed and the dust, it was impossible to tell to which army they belonged. They were either English or German;

that was all that could be certain. And that could be deduced from their khaki uniforms. There were no colors to emerge, bright and vivid, from their dun mass; no points of steel, on which the rays of the sun might shine and be reflected.

"If they were French we could tell," said Henri, proudly. "We could see their red and blue uniforms and, if they were cuirassiers, their breastplates!"

"Yes. The French are far behind the times in that," said Frank, a little impatiently. "Nowadays armies don't try to act as if they were on dress parade. They wear uniforms that can't be seen any great distance away."

"The French army fights in the uniform in which its famous victories were won," said Henri.

"And it gets killed in them, too," said Frank. "Gets killed when it doesn't do any good. But that doesn't matter now. Ah, they're English! I can see that now. We needn't tell them to hurry —they're going for all they're worth now.

They've heard the firing and are hastening."

The English horsemen swept by. They were riding low in the saddle, urging their horses on. Each man carried a carbine, ready to dismount at any moment and give battle as seemed best. In five minutes they had swept by.

"Two troops," said Frank. "Well, that ought to be enough, though there's no telling how many Uhlans there were. Ah, here come some more!"

This time it was a battery of light artillery—four guns, going along almost as quickly as the cavalry had done.

"That ought to settle it," said Frank, with satisfaction. "Even if they run into a brigade of Uhlans, the guns ought to do the trick. I don't believe they had any guns or we'd have heard them by this time."

"They're still fighting back there," said Henri, as they wheeled their bicycles back to the road. "I can hear the firing."

"Yes, and I think it must be a pretty lively skirmish, too," said Frank. "Captain Hardy

would keep them at it. Listen! The Uhlans must outnumber them three or four to one. I hope the others get up in time."

A few minutes gave assurance that they had. They heard the firing still more loudly; then, a few minutes later, the heavier sound of the guns chimed in. And then there was silence behind them.

"Score one for our side," said Frank. "We know a little more than we did before, too. I think it's a safe guess that the Germans aren't in this direction. We can go along without worrying about them."

As he said that they were coasting down a little hill, at the bottom of which, Henri had said, another road crossed the one on which they were riding just around a little turn in the road. And as they took that turn, their feet off the pedals, they almost fell off their wheels in astonishment. For the transverse road was gray-green with soldiers; soldiers with spiked helmets, marching south!

A moment later they did fall off their wheels, deliberately, and at a common impulse, because it was the only way there was of stopping before they were in the midst of the German infantry. There was just a chance that they had not been seen and they took it, and fled to the hedge again, leaving their bicycles behind. There was no time to bother about such trifles now. The thing to do was to make good their escape, if they could.

"Whew!" said Frank, whistling. "That was a close shave, if you like! Where on earth did they come from? And how is it they didn't see the English cavalry?"

"Perhaps they didn't care, if they did see them," said Henri, wide-eyed with astonishment. "Look, Frank, there must be thousands of them! Where can they be going?"

"Where did they come from? That's more to the point!" said Frank, vastly excited. "I know! They got the railway—that's what they did! They must have come through Arras. Jove, though, they took a terrible risk, Harry! Because,

no matter how many of them there are, they can't even begin to compare with the allies in numbers —not around here. But how can they be here without being seen? What are our aeroplanes doing?"

"I haven't seen one all day—not since we left Amiens, at least," said Henri. "But I know where they are—flying over the enemy's lines, trying to locate the guns exactly. That's what they try to do, you know. They decide just where a masked battery is, and then our fellows can drop their shells right among their guns. The gunners can't get the range properly any other way. There isn't any powder smoke to help them any more, you know. So I suppose that's where they are."

"Then I tell you what I think happened. I think they cut the railroad, or, rather, they didn't cut it. I bet they ran those fellows down there through on trains—right through our army."

"How could they do that?"

"Easily—no, not easily. It wouldn't be easy

at all. But it's possible. They've caught a lot of our men, haven't they? Well, couldn't they use their uniforms so that it would look as if it was a French or an English train? Let me have your field glass. It's better than mine."

They were sheltered now and safe from observation. They could, nevertheless, see the German column strung out along the road. It seemed to cover at least two or three miles of the road, and there was no way of being sure that there were not more men.

"I think they've got pretty nearly five thousand men," Frank decided finally. "They're in light marching order, for Germans, too. No camp kitchens—nothing. Only what the men themselves are carrying. They're making a forced march to get to some particular place. Queer to use infantry, though, but I suppose they couldn't get horses through with whatever trick it was they played."

"They're beginning to turn off," said Henri. "See, the head of the column is slipping through

that field over there. They must know this country as well as I do or better. That's a short cut that will take them to Hierville."

"I don't believe they're going to Hierville or any other village now," said Frank. "Tell me, are those woods I can see in front of them at all thick?"

"Yes, they're old, too. They've been preserved for a long time. That's the oldest part of the old park of the Chateau d'Avriere. It was one of the castles that wasn't destroyed in the revolution."

"Well, they're going to take cover in those woods. This is all a part of a mighty careful plan, Harry. I think they have turned a real trick. If the French or the English knew that the Germans were in any such force as this so far south and west as this they would be acting very differently, I believe. Their aeroplanes have certainly failed them here."

"They're on the line of retreat, if we were beaten again in that battle we've been hearing all afternoon."

"I don't think it was a real battle at all, Harry. I think it was just rear guard fighting. But I tell you what we've got to do. We've got to get through and tell about these troops. Of course, they may know all about them at headquarters, but it doesn't look so. We had better wait here until we make fairly sure of what they're going to do and until there isn't any more danger of our being seen, too. They'll have scouts out all around them. We were mighty lucky to get through so long as we have. But it's going to get dark pretty soon, and then we ought to be safe."

They lay in their improvised shelter. It took the Germans a long time to pass, but at last the road below was free of them, and the last of them slipped into the sheltering obscurity of the woods.

"We ought to find out if they're staying there, or if they are still moving on," said Frank. "It's risky, but I think we ought to take the risk. You stay here, Henri. I'll try to get around, and come back."

"Why should I stay here? If there's a risk,

why shouldn't I take it just as well as you?"

"Because one of us has got to get through. If I'm caught, you'll still be here and able to get through to headquarters with what we've found out already. And the reason I'd better go is that I'm an American. If they catch me they're not so likely to hold me."

"But I don't think it's fair for you to take the risk. I ought to do it," said Henri, stubbornly.

"I don't care what you think," said Frank, "I'm going. Au revoir, Harry!"

"Wait a minute! How are you going to find out?"

"I'll try to skirt the wood."

"You needn't do that. Keep straight on the road we were taking, instead of turning off at the foot of the hill. About half a mile beyond the cross-roads the road rises again, and you'll find a windmill. If you climb to the top of that you can see beyond the woods, and you ought to be able to tell if the Germans are moving out of the woods."

"Splendid!" said Frank. He admired Henri's

readiness. once he had made up his mind that Frank was going alone, to help him with his greater knowledge of the countryside. Some boys would have been sullen, and would not have volunteered that information, he was sure.

Before Frank started on his lonely errand, he carried Henri's bicycle back of the hedge. Then he mounted his own, and coasted down the hill. His object was to seem entirely indifferent, should some German scout or straggler spy him, but plainly the Germans had decided to leave the road uncovered.

"I guess they decided it was better to risk being surprised than to give themselves away," he said to himself. "Otherwise they'd have been pretty sure to leave an outpost of some sort here because this road looks like just the place for troop movements. It looks more and more as if they had really managed to make a secret of this column."

It did not take him long to find the windmill of which Henri had told him. The place was deserted; there was no one to oppose his entry. And,

when he reached the top, he found that there was an excellent view of the country for several miles, a much better one than they had had from their shelter on the hillside above the Germans.

He could see the woods into which the invading troops had disappeared, looking dark and mysterious in the deepening twilight. There was no sign of life about them; no smoke rose above the treetops. And no Germans were beyond them. Then his guess had been right, he decided. They had made for those woods to obtain shelter, and they relied upon the fact that the allies did not know of their presence. It was a daring move; it might well have been successful, save for the accident of the two boys who had observed it. Indeed, even now there was a chance, and something more than a chance, that the German object, whatever it was, might be attained. Frank and Henri were a long way yet from having reached the British headquarters. Unknown dangers and obstacles lay between them and their destination.

"With the German attack developing so quickly

as this, we don't know where we may not run into them," mused Frank, as he descended from the windmill and mounted his wheel, preparing to start back to join Henri. "They may be anywhere. I don't want to see them win, but they certainly are wonderfully good fighters. They have good leaders, too."

When he reached Henri he found that his French comrade was lighting the lamp of his bicycle. With a laugh he blew out the flame.

"But it's dark and we'll be arrested if we ride without a light," said Henri, protestingly.

"That law was made for peace, not for war," said Frank. "When we know as little about where the Germans are as we do, I'm not going to take any chances. We'll ride with lights out, thank you. Come on!"

As they rode along in the growing dusk, close together, Frank told what he had seen.

"That was a good guess, then," said Henri. "But, Frank, how can they know so well what to do? You would think that they had been brought

up in this country, those German officers!"

"They might as well have been," said Frank. "I've heard stories of how they prepare for war. They have maps that show every inch of land in this part of France. They know the roads, the hills, even the fields and the houses. They have officers with every regiment who know where ditches are that they can use as trenches, and who have studied the land so that they recognize places they have never seen, just from the maps that they have studied until they know them by heart. And it isn't only France that they know that way, but England, and some parts of Russia, too. Why, I've even heard that they've studied parts of America, around New York and Boston, almost as thoroughly."

Henri cried out in anger.

"That is how they have behaved!" he cried. "They have been planning, all these years, then, to crush France!"

"Oh, cheer up, Harry," said Frank. "I guess you'll find that your French staff officers have re-

turned the compliment. Unless I'm very much mistaken, any one of them could tell you just as much about the country in Alsace and Lorraine, and all through the Rhine Province, as the Germans could of this section. It wasn't so in the last war. Then French officers were losing their way in French territory. That was one reason why the battle at the Speichern was lost—because French reinforcements lost their way. But this time France got ready, too."

"Shall we still make for Le Cateau?"

"There's nothing else to do, until we find out that the staff has changed its location."

Riding along in a light that made men out of the shadows of trees and regiments of the shocked corn in the fields was eerie work. But neither of them was afraid. They were fired by a purpose to serve the cause in which they had enlisted. And they were thrilled, too, by the knowledge of the German force upon which they had spied, themselves unseen.

And then all at once, out of a dark spot in

the road, appeared a man, holding a horse.

"Halt!" he cried, in a guttural voice.

They obeyed, perforce. And when they were close enough, they saw that he was a German cavalryman, one of the dreaded Uhlans.

CHAPTER X

THROUGH THE LINES

For a moment Frank's heart sank, but suddenly a hoarse laugh surprised him and revived his spirits. It was the Uhlan. He was laughing at them.

"Kinder!" he said, deep down in his throat.

"Nothing so alarming in this," thought Frank, experiencing quick relief, and awaiting the Uhlan's next words.

"I have my way lost," he said, in a guttural English. "Kannst du Englisch sprechen?"

"I am an American," said Frank, at the same time nudging Henri, and hoping that he would understand it as a signal to keep still. "Where do you want to go?"

"That matters not," said the German, cautiously. "Only tell me, which way from here is Amiens?"

They told him.

"And where does the road to St. Quentin turn off from this one?"

"It is the next turn, to your left," said Frank, truthfully.

"Good! Then I will be going. Go home, kinder. You will get into trouble if you stay hereabout."

He vaulted upon his horse, and the next moment they heard hoofs clattering along the hard road, and, looking after him, could see the sparks as the iron clashed with the flint of the road's surface.

"That was easy!" said Frank, with a gasp of relief.

"He was alone," said Henri.

"Carrying despatches, I expect," said Frank. "He wouldn't tell us where he was going, naturally, but I bet he's looking for those other troops we saw. Dangerous work, too. But I wonder where he came from. If there are more Uhlans in front, we may get into trouble."

"Suppose we hide the bicycles near here and

go along through the fields? Don't you think that will be better, Frank?" was Henri's cautious suggestion.

"Yes, I suppose it will, though it will be slower, too."

"Of course. But if we are going to be stopped all the time along this road, we'll really save time in the end by doing it."

So they made a cache, as Frank told Henri it should be called, hiding their wheels so that they would have a chance of recovering them if they came back this way. They marked the spot not only by landmarks, but by the stars, which were beginning to dot the sky now.

"There may be fighting here," said Frank. "And if there is, this place may look very different before we see it again. If there is a battle the trees will go, and the fences, and all the houses for if they are not burned deliberately, the shells will destroy them."

"Look, Frank, what is that?"

Henri had turned and was pointing now to the

north. There a stream of white light shot into the air, then dropped, and left only its reflection. But in a moment others joined it, and the whole sky to the north was brilliantly lighted. It was like a display of Northern Lights, only nearer and even more brilliant.

"Searchlights, of course," said Frank. "They can throw them on the trenches—and they're good to guard against aeroplanes and dirigibles, too. At night, you see, there'd be a chance for aeroplanes to fly very low and do a lot of damage."

"Can't they hear the engines from the ground?"

"Not always. They have mufflers on a good many aeroplane motors now, so that they don't make any more noise than a quiet automobile."

"I didn't know that. Well, there's one good thing about the searchlights. We know which way to go. Come on."

"All right. The more I think of it, the better it is not to be on the roads. Here in the fields we're

a lot less likely to run into stray parties. And I'd just about as soon meet Germans as allies. If they're retreating and having trouble, they might hold us up as long as the Germans would. They wouldn't believe we really had despatches."

For a time they made good, steady progress. The roar of artillery fire in front of them had been resumed, and now it filled the air, proving that they were much closer to the battle. The great waves of sound beat against their ears, making their heads swim at first, but gradually they grew used to it, and could hear other and more trivial sounds—the chirping of night insects and the occasional hooting of owls.

"I don't hear the rifle fire," said Henri, after a time. "Only once in a while, that is. Why is that, I wonder? Are the big guns drowning it?"

"No. Because if that were the reason, we wouldn't hear it at all. I think they don't do that at night. It's just a case of trying to find the places where the enemy's troops are massed, and keeping up a steady fire of shells to drive them

out. Maybe the searchlights help. They've been fighting all day, you know, and even soldiers have to have some rest. They have to eat and sleep or they can't keep up the work."

They crossed more than one road, but stuck to the fields, travelling in a straight line as nearly as they could figure their course. When they had decided to join the Boy Scouts, both had studied the stars, since a knowledge of the heavens is one of the most important things about scouting, and they found what they had learned very valuable now. Thus they could keep their bearings, though owing to their desertion of the roads, Henri confessed that he had very little idea of where they were.

"Along the roads one has landmarks," he said. "I have gone all through here, over and over again. My father used to drive this way very often in our automobile."

"Well, we can't go very far wrong," said Frank, cheerfully. "All we've got to do is to follow the old German maxim, 'March on the cannon thunder!' That was their one rule in 1870, you

know and a very good rule it proved too."

So they went on. And they still seemed to be a long way from the seat of the heavy artillery firing when a challenge halted them, as they were about to cross a road.

" 'Alt! 'Oo goes there?" called a cockney voice sharply.

"Friends," cried Frank, instantly.

" 'Alt, friends, while I 'as a look at you," said the sentry.

' Call your officer, please. We are carrying despatches," said Frank.

"I'll call 'im, all right. My word! You ain't nothin' but kiddies, you ain't! 'Ere! Corporal of the guard! I sye! Corporal of the guard!"

He raised his voice in the shout, and a minute or so later a corporal appeared.

"Came up to me, sir," said the sentry. "Said as 'ow they wanted me to call the officer of the guard. Carryin' despatches, they sye they is."

"All right," said the corporal, briskly. "Come with me, my lads. Step smartly when you're

told or you may be shot," in a genial voice.

They followed him through a field that seemed deserted, then came to a small cluster of tents, where they stopped.

"Wait here," said the corporal. "I'll bring the lieutenant."

They did not have long to wait before a young officer approached them.

"My word!" he said, when he saw how young they were. "What are you youngsters doing here?"

"We're looking for headquarters, sir," said Frank. "We are carrying despatches from Amiens."

"All right! Give them to me, and I'll see that they're forwarded, my lads," said the officer, with a grin.

"We can't do that, sir," said Frank. "Our orders are to carry them to headquarters—and to give the word Mezieres."

"Ah, that's different, now," said the officer. "Corporal, give me two men to take these des-

patch-bearers through the lines," came the order.

The giving of the word had made a great change in his attitude. It was plain that before that he had not taken them seriously, but had supposed them to be playing some prank. Now, however, he looked at them curiously.

"Boy Scouts?" he suggested.

"Yes, sir," said Frank. "Detailed to special duty, without uniforms."

"I see! Jolly plucky of you, I call it. I say, you're not French, my lad, are you? How did you get here? Well, never mind! Here's your escort. Be off with you, now."

Their troubles were over now. Within five minutes they were at headquarters. There a weary staff officer received them. They saluted.

"Very well," he said. "Give me your despatches."

Each of them produced his handful of marbles from his pocket, and laid them solemnly before the major. He stared, first at the marbles, then at them.

"What sort of a silly prank is this?" he roared. "Do you think we've nothing better to do than to waste time in jokes? If you were men—"

"We are obeying orders, sir," said Frank, quietly. "Those are the despatches Colonel Menier at Amiens gave us to deliver. He said that only one officer here would know what they meant, and how to get the despatches."

"O, I beg your pardon," said the major. He took down his telephone. "Ask if despatches are expected from Amiens," he said, into the instrument. "And find out who is in charge."

"There is another matter, sir," said Frank. "We saw German troops as we came here."

"Uhlans. Yes, they're all around behind us. One squadron of them was cut up when it attacked a convoy. There aren't many of them."

"No, sir, I didn't mean Uhlans. There is a force of infantry—five thousand men, we estimated—"

"What?" thundered the major, springing to his feet. "You must be dreaming! Where did you

think you saw them? And where were they?"

Frank explained.

"It sounds incredible," said the major, frowning. "Come! I'll take you to General Smith-Derrien. If that's true, it's highly important news. Here, show me on this map just the place where you say you saw them."

Frank and Henri pointed at once to the wood in which the German infantry had vanished, then followed the major out of the room.

CHAPTER XI

AN UNEXPECTED CHANCE

The first impression they had of General Smith-Derrien was of his absolute calmness. The major had been excited when he heard the report of the German infantry in the woods. But when they entered the room in which sat the British general who was responsible for the retreat, as they guessed, they saw a quiet-faced man with smiling eyes, who listened attentively to the reports of the officers who were constantly hurrying up to him, spoke a word or two in answer, and turned, imperturbably, to the next comer.

Their guide left them near the door.

"Wait a minute here," he said. "I'll tell the General your story. But he'll want to speak to you himself. He always does."

Frank watched the British leader closely as he turned to the major, who now went up to him. If the news moved him, he gave no sign

of his emotion. Instead he nodded quickly, once or twice; then he looked over toward Frank and Henri. The major turned to them, beckoning, and they went up. General Smith-Derrien was sitting at a table. Before him was an ordnance map of the section covered by his operations.

"Now tell me exactly what happened, as quickly as you can," he said. "You saw these Germans—just where? Point it out on the map. Give me your position and the road they took."

Frank and Henri studied the map a moment. They traced their own course from Amiens; soon they found the spot. The map was on a very large scale, and it showed the hills and a great deal of detail. It was easy to explain just where they had seen the Germans.

"They went into the woods, you say," said the general. "But why did you think they stayed there? Why shouldn't they have gone on?"

"I went along the road to a spot where I could see beyond the woods, sir," said Frank. "And there was no sign of them."

"You did? That was excellent—regular scouting. Oh, I fancy I understand! Boy Scouts, are you?"

"Yes, sir," they echoed together.

"Well, if your information is exact—and I have no reason to doubt it, of course—you did a very fine piece of scouting, and I shall be glad to see that you get the proper amount of credit for it, when the time comes. Now your information is most valuable. But before I can act on it, I must be absolutely certain that it is accurate. Will one of you help one of my scouts to determine this?"

"Let me go, sir," said Frank, quickly. "I was the one who saw the other side of the woods—"

"But I know the country best," protested Henri. "And—"

"I think you'd better go," said the general to Frank. Perhaps he thought Frank was English; in any case he selected him. "I don't think it will be dangerous at all, or I shouldn't let you go. We haven't started using boys in this war yet. Major, you will see to it that a start is made as

soon as possible!" turning to that officer. The major saluted.

"Yes, sir, at once," he said. "The one who does not go can deliver the despatches they brought from Amiens—a handful of marbles!"

"Eh? What's that? Those are the despatches from Colonel Menier. I'll take those!"

Plainly, since he knew of them, he was the officer to whom they should be delivered. So Frank and Henri, not without some misgivings, since the major's annoyance at the sight of the marbles had rather depressed them, handed over their marbles. General Smith-Derrien picked them up, weighed them in his hand, and finally selected two, to the undisguised amazement of his staff. But when he pressed a hidden spring, and each marble flew back, showing that it was hollow, cries of admiration came from those who were close by.

"Very well. They are in good order," he said, after a glance at the thin but tough paper. "I will send an answer by the scout who remains here."

The major was already moving toward the door, and Frank, with a quick grasp of Henri's hand and a salute for the general, followed him. He was sorry for Henri's disappointment, but he had made up his mind when they left Amiens that whenever possible, he himself would take any risks that were to be run. No one would care greatly if anything happened to him, since his parents were dead, and his only other close relative was his uncle, of whom he had seen very little. But Henri's mother was alive, and, moreover, she had troubles enough. Her husband was at the front, and there was no telling whether or not he would ever return.

"Come along, young 'un," said the major. His name, Frank learned, when a passing officer spoke to him, was Cooper. "Know what you're going to do?"

"I'm to help a scout to determine the position of the Germans we saw," said Frank.

"Yes, but how? In an aeroplane, my lad! I envy you. They've never let me go up in one of

the blooming things yet—and just because I happen to be assigned to a special job here with the staff. A lot of fun this war is going to be for me! We've been at it pretty nearly a month, and I haven't been under fire yet!"

Frank found it hard to conceal his delight. He had always wanted to have the experience of riding in an aeroplane, but never before had he seen even a remote chance that it would be gratified. Now he was to have fulfilled one of his most cherished ambitions—and in what a way! To fly with one of the wonderful aviators of whom he had been hearing ever since the war began, and over hostile territory. Risk! What if there was?

In his own room Major Cooper sent an orderly flying, and in a few moments he returned, followed by a spare, tall man in a uniform differing slightly from that of the regular troops. He wore a heavy sweater, and on his head was a headgear resembling, Frank thought, that worn by football players in America.

"You sent for me, Major?"

"Yes, Captain Greene. You'll have to make a flight to-night. This lad is one of two Boy Scouts who have reported seeing German infantry in rather considerable force south and west of our position here. He will show you on the map just where he says they are lying up. The general wants to verify this report or disprove it as quickly as possible. Your orders are simply to make a reconnaissance and to run no avoidable risks. If it is possible, ascertain the facts without betraying your own presence. I have detailed you because you have a silent motor."

"Very well, sir," said Captain Greene. "Now, then, my lad, sharp's the word. Show me just where you say these Germans are."

For the third time Frank pointed out the spot on the map, and the flyer whistled.

"Don't wonder you want to know where they are!" he said. "If that's so, it's a pretty big sell for us flying chaps—eh, what? We rather fancied there wasn't a chance for them to do anything that we didn't know all about as soon as it was done."

"Exactly," said the major, rather dryly. "Well, here's your chance to make up for errors of omission. Get the facts, and get back as quickly as you can."

"All right. Double quick, young 'un. What's your name, eh? Might as well be sociable!"

Frank told him, and liked the tall aviator immensely. But there was no more talk between them as he followed the captain to the outside. He had all he could do to keep up with the Englishman's great strides without trying to talk too. Greene led the way to a park-like enclosure, where, under shaded electric lights that lit the ground fully but were so screened that no betraying flashes showed from above, a dozen aeroplanes stood, gaunt and ghostlike in the night.

"See those lights?" said Greene. "If one of those German Johnnies in a Taube came along he could make a lot of mess by dropping a couple of bombs down here. An aeroplane's delicate enough as it is. A bomb will put it out of business in no time. Here we are! Wait till I try the motor and

see to my tank. If you run out of petrol at five hundred feet you can't always find a garage where they'll sell you more!"

The tank was full, however. His mechanic had seen to that. And the engine responded beautifully to the first test.

"All right," said Greene. "In with you! Ever been up?"

"No. This is my first trip," said Frank.

"Easy enough, if you don't get scared. Keep perfectly still. No matter what happens, don't touch me or anything except the grips for your hands that you'll find there. She's apt to rock and kick like a broncho sometimes but you can't fall out, because you'll be strapped in. Remember, now, don't touch me and don't touch any levers or anything else you see."

CHAPTER XII

THE MONOPLANE

Looking down from above, as he was doing, it was hard for Frank to keep his bearings at all. Naturally, everything looked very different. He had been used to looking up at houses, and had had them in one plane. Now everything was flat before him. In the day time the resemblance of the country as he now saw it to a map might have helped him. But at night, even on a clear night, things were blurred. Fences and roads ran together confusedly. And this night was not clear. The day had been fair, but now clouds were coming up.

"We'll have some rain, hang it!" said Greene. "The firing seems to bring it. At least that's what they say. Wonder if it's true? I suppose it might."

"I should think it might be a good thing," said Frank. "It'll make it harder for them to see

us, won't it? And that ought to help us."

"Yes, but it'll make it a good deal harder for us to see what we're after, too. Cuts both ways, you see. Still I don't mind as long as we don't have fog or wind, and I think I'd rather have the wind. You know where you're at with wind, anyway. In a fog—Lord! You've no idea what a thing fog is until you've tried to make a landing in it."

With the motor muffled down, they were able to talk easily. In the earlier days of aeroplanes the motor made so much noise that anything like a sustained conversation was impossible. But now the motor only purred gently in their ears, just like that of a motor car. For military purposes the silence thus obtained more than made up for the slight sacrifice of power. The more old-fashioned 'planes, many of which were still in use, advertised their presence to an enemy as soon as they came at all near. But this new type, largely used by the British and the French, as Frank knew, had to be seen before they were in

any danger, so silently do they wing their flight.

"Talking about fog," Greene went on, talking as indifferent as if they had been on solid ground, "I had a nasty experience just before Kaiser Bill started this trouble. Went up at Sheerness, for an experimental flight in this same 'plane. First time I'd had her out, and I didn't know her very well. And one of those old-fashioned sea fogs came rolling in when I was ten miles from anywhere. Never saw anything so sudden in my life!"

"How did you find your way, sir?"

"I didn't! I just went up and up until I was above the fog and in the sunlight. You can do that, you know. But that was a queer fog—rose a whole lot. Anyway, when I got above it, it was precious cold. And the sun didn't do me much good. I'd got lost, so far as my bearings below were concerned, making spirals as I went up. What I hoped for was to find out something when I was above the fog."

"How was that? You mean that the fog would

only spread over a certain distance?" he asked.

"That's it exactly. Only I didn't know that fog! So far as I could tell, it spread over all England and Ireland, too, with some left over for France! Only one thing for it, of course. I knew I'd get away from it if I kept on flying. So I steered by the sun as well as I could, and kept on until my petrol began to run short, and a cylinder began missing. And then, just as I was wondering whose windows I'd break when I went down, it began to thin out, and slipped away as quickly as it had come. And I was right above the golf links on Wimbledon Common. I volplaned down, and landed on a putting green, and an old colonel who'd been invalided home from India said I'd done it on purpose, and he was going to have me court-martialled!"

Frank laughed heartily at the story. But at the same time, he suspected Captain Greene's purpose in telling it. He thought the captain wanted to keep his spirits up, and make him forget that he had never had a flight before, and he admired

and liked him more than ever in consequence, even though, as he told himself, it wasn't necessary.

"Hello! I think we're getting near your spot, young 'un," said Greene, abruptly. He dipped down, and Frank peered down to see where they were.

"Yes," he cried, in assent. "There's the hill we were coming down when we saw them, just as we rounded that turn. That's the road they were marching along, and there, over to our left, are the woods. I wonder if they're still there."

"We'll soon know," said Greene. "Now for a little climbing. I'm not afraid of being hit, but orders are to find them without being seen, if we can manage it. So we'll try the high spots for a bit."

At once the monoplane began climbing, ascending in great spirals. Frank was absorbed by the sensation. He found that he could see the ground receding without feeling any qualms, and said so.

"You're lucky," said Greene, briefly. "Made

me feel queer first few times I tried it, I can tell you. You're probably a born flyer—and the chances are you'll never do much of it, I suppose! Always the way!"

Frank, looking down, saw that they were moving away from the woods which they were to reconnoitre, and mentioned it.

"Got to," said Greene, briefly. "Then we'll fly back. We can't climb in a straight line. When I went out for altitude once, I made twelve thousand feet, and when I finished climbing I was nearly fifteen miles, in a straight line, from where I started. Let's see. Got that flashlight I gave you? Play it right on the board there till I tell you to stop."

Frank obeyed, shooting the little spear of light on the various instruments in front of the aviator.

"All right. Hold it there. My barograph, you see. Gives me my height by showing the change in atmospheric pressure. That's how we calculate height. Not very exact, because all sorts of things vary the pressure. But it's near enough. A

thousand feet! That's good enough. I don't believe they're looking for us. We don't usually scout behind our own lines."

Now he brought the monoplane around in a great sweep and flew straight over the woods. But, though Frank looked down through powerful navy night glasses, of the sort that are used for look-out duty at sea, he could see nothing.

"Clasp them around my head—so," said Greene. "See the trick? All right! Now I'll have a look. There's another pair in my pocket—use those for yourself."

But if the Germans were there, they were concealing their presence with a good deal of care and skill.

"Have to go lower, then," decided Greene. "Get ready! We'll shoot the chutes now."

He pointed the monoplane straight down, cut out his motor, and glided earthward in a glorious volplane, the most wonderful sensation that even flight, with all its wonders, can afford. When the earth seemed about to come up and hit them,

though it was still actually a good five hundred feet below, he caught the machine, righted it, and started the motor again. Then he had to fly back until he was again directly over the woods, and once more, while the monoplane moved very slowly, they peered down. But still there was no sign.

"Humph!" said Greene. "If they were supposed to be anything but Germans, I'd say you'd told us a cock and bull story, young 'un! English troops, or French, would show some sort of a light. Some fool would take a chance to get a smoke. But these Germans! They're not men—they're machines. They'll obey orders that officers wouldn't take the trouble to give in any other army. We'll have to make sure. Up we go again!"

Frank could not see how going up would make it possible for them to get the information that coming down hadn't afforded. But he said nothing, because he had come to feel by this time that when Captain Greene did a thing he had a per-

fectly sound reason for his action. Nor was he wrong. Once more they climbed in a high spiral curve until they were higher than they had been before. For the first time, Frank now felt a peculiar ringing in his ears. He mentioned it, and Greene laughed.

"Pressure," he said. "You'll get used to it! Lord, sometimes I've felt as if my head would burst when I started to climb. But it doesn't last long. Feel in the seat there beside you, at your left. There ought to be a big electric torch."

"Here it is! I've got it, sir," said Frank, a moment later.

"All right. Touch the button at the end. Let's see if it lights up properly."

It did, decidedly, for the result was a blinding glare.

"Pretty powerful, isn't it?" said Greene. "It's used for signalling, you see. Flash the light, and you can reproduce Morse perfectly. When you're high up it can be seen a long way, too. Now hold it straight down and flash it, then give a steady

glare. Let us see if we cannot draw anything."

Frank obeyed, at the same time getting a glimpse of Greene's idea. He held the torch pointing straight down, and saw the beam of light shooting straight down. It was not powerful enough, of course, by the time it reached the tree-tops, to illuminate them, and so make anything below visible, but it was certainly strong enough to be observed from below, he thought. But still there was no movement, and the uncanny silence and darkness below persisted.

"All right. There's still another chance," said Greene, patiently. He drew a revolver from his pocket.

"Flash your little light this way. Let me see if it's all right," he said.

Frank obeyed.

"New fangled automatic—very powerful, and shoots a .44 bullet almost as far as an old-fashioned rifle," explained Greene. "Very useful if one runs into another 'plane unexpectedly—and the other fellow happens to be a German."

A moment later he opened fire, shooting straight downward. He could not aim, of course, but it was not his object to hit anything. He emptied one clip of cartridges, and before the last shot was fired the woods below began to spit fire. At once the monoplane began racing.

"Got 'em!" cried Greene, exultingly. "I thought that would do it! It isn't human nature to be under fire without sending back a shot or two—not even German human nature!"

No bullets came near them, but there was no longer any possible doubt that the Germans were below. The fusillade had settled that. Greene slowed down.

"Show your light quickly, then douse it at once," he cried.

Frank flashed the light of the big torch for an instant. And at once the monoplane shot forward.

"See the point?" cried Greene. "They'll aim at where the light was. Only we won't be obliging enough to be there! Well, this is a good

night's work, my lad! You were right, and if I'm not much mistaken, you'll get your name in dispatches for this. The beggars! I'd like to know how they got through without being spotted!"

All the time the monoplane was racing away. But suddenly there was a sharp crack behind them, and in an agony of concern Greene twisted around in his seat.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "I crowed too soon! That's the petrol tank—bullet hole! It'll leak out, and we can't stop the leak!"

"If you went down right away, would it all get out before you reached the ground?"

"No, but they'll catch us if we go down here. Can't do that."

"It's the only chance!" said Frank. "Isn't it?"

"You're right. I'll take it. Good boy! You don't mind the risk?"

"No!" said Frank.

Then they were rushing down. It was a desperate venture. Greene pointed for a field, but in

the darkness the risk of capture by the Germans was the least that they faced.

Greene had cut out his engine; there was too much danger of an explosion, with the leaking petrol, to allow the spark to continue. He had to volplane down this time, not as a quick way of descending, but as the only means of preventing a disastrous fall. Even in broad daylight there is always risk in landing with a dead motor. Here, in the darkness and with unknown country below, the risk was multiplied a hundred times.

All that Greene knew with any certainty was that he was over country broken up into fields. The fences were numerous, there were ditches, too, and obstructions of all sorts. The larger ones he could see readily enough, when he got close; it was the smaller ones that threatened the real danger.

But if the danger was great, Greene was a master of his craft. He swooped downward. Then, when he was scarcely a hundred feet up, he caught the machine with a fine show of skill

and held it, for a moment, on an even keel.

"We'll chance it in the next field," he called. "Can't stay up any further. Here goes!"

Down, down, they went. Then they were down, bumping along. But the element of luck that, despite all his skill, Greene had to have, favored him. The field was smooth and the monoplane came to rest safely. In an instant both were out, Greene first, since Frank, having to free himself from his straps, was delayed.

"Quick! The small flashlight!" called the flyer. "Here, give it to me! If we're to save any essence we've got to be quick!"

He took the light. But a quick look over the tank failed to show a spurting stream of gasoline.

"By Jove! Wonder if I could have been mistaken? Perhaps it was something else they hit!" cried Greene. But then he groaned. As he unscrewed the cap of the tank and peered in, he saw that it was bone dry.

CHAPTER XIII

A DANGEROUS ERRAND

For a moment Greene was speechless with despair. Fate had tricked him, it seemed, after he had done his best—and a better best than most men could even have attempted. Then he grinned.

"We'll have to hoof it," he said. "A good twelve miles, too! If we were champions at cross-country work it would take us the best part of two hours. And it's so long since I've used my legs that I don't know how long I'll be."

"There's one chance," said Frank. "I remember that I saw a little inn on the road the Germans took this afternoon. We're not so very far from that now. These little inns along the roads in France all have petrol for motorists who run short. If I went there I might get some."

Greene shook his head doubtfully.

"The government's taken all the essence it could find," he said. "I don't believe they'd have

any. And, besides, there's a good chance that the Germans have men there."

"Still it's a chance," said Frank. "Won't you let me try? If I can't get it we shan't lose much time. And if I do, look at the difference it would make."

"That's true enough," said Greene. "All right, try it. I'll mend up the hole, when I find it, and if you do get some essence, we can be off at once. Good luck!"

Frank was on his way already, slipping away in the direction whence they had come. Luckily enough, he got his bearings by the windmill from which he had observed the wood into which the Germans had gone. To make his way to the road along which he and Henri had first seen the Germans passing was an easy matter. But he was afraid of roads by this time, and the more so because he knew that the Germans, having been aroused by the attack from the sky, would be doubly on the alert. So he stuck to the side of the road, religiously taking advantage of every bit

of cover he could find to escape the foe.

"They knew they'd given themselves away just as soon as they fired at us," he reasoned, thinking half aloud as he trudged along, which was a habit of his. "And I don't believe they know they hit us at all. They do know that they didn't bring us down at once. Anyhow, there's no reason for them to be secret any more, and if they stay in that wood, they'll throw out pickets now, because they'll think that as soon as we went back and made our report troops would be sent to rout them out. It's up to me to be mighty careful."

That was good sound reasoning, too. From all he had learned since the war began, he knew that the Germans were by no means foes to be despised. They had been pretty generally victorious, but that was not all. They had shown a capacity for being always ready, for thinking of everything that might come up to block their plans. And he was sure, therefore, that the German commander would not argue that the aeroplane had got clean away just because the proba-

bilities indicated that it had. He was almost certain to beat the country within a reasonable area for it, in the hope of finding it crippled and thus unable to carry the news it had come to get.

"I bet the Germans wouldn't have sent just one aeroplane," he reflected. "They'd have sent two, so that if anything happened to one, the other could have brought back the news."

But though he was thinking hard, he didn't linger as he went. Soon he came to the transverse road along which the Germans had gone, and turned in the direction they had taken. It was beginning to rain a little now, and it was very dark. He still stuck to the fields, though he was close to the road, and he found nothing to bar his way to the inn. When he got there, moreover, he found the place dark and deserted. Not a soul was in sight, but there were evidences that spoke as eloquently as men or women could have done. In the tap room furniture was smashed and broken and shattered glass was about the floor. Plainly the Germans had stopped as they went by.

"Of course!" he said, to himself. "If there were people here they took them along with them. They wouldn't be likely to leave any French people, whose first idea would be to tell what they had seen! It's certainly lucky that they didn't see us. We'd be with them now, I guess."

It was spooky work exploring the abandoned inn in the damp, dark night and with the knowledge that German soldiers were probably no great distance away. It was less than a quarter of a mile to the edge of the wood that had assumed such an important aspect, and he expected at any moment to hear the footsteps of intruders. None the less he went about his task quietly and coolly.

"If they had any essence, they'd hide it," he said to himself. "They'd know that both armies would need it for automobiles and aeroplanes, and they'd try to keep any they had left. So it won't be in any of the usual places."

For that reason he did not even leave the main building to make a search in the stable that was used as a garage. Instead, he went into the cel-

lar. Here it was still plainer that the Germans had passed through. His feet stepped into puddles of sticky dampness, and, using his flashlight, he saw that it was wine. The heads of casks had been knocked in; broken bottles, too, strewed the floor.

This, however, had not been wanton destruction, he was sure. It had an object, and that object had been to prevent the soldiers from getting anything to drink. Troops on an errand requiring such extraordinary secrecy as had been maintained in this case could not be allowed to drink any liquor. That would have spoiled in all likelihood the remarkable discipline of which Captain Greene had spoken.

But, once more, it was not his business to think of what he saw, or to speculate about it, but to find the petrol if any was to be found. And he stumbled upon the hidden store quite suddenly, and quite literally, too. In one corner of the cellar was what looked like a pile of kindling wood. Harry kicked it indifferently in passing, and was

almost thrown when his feet encountered a resistance more solid than he had any reason to expect. He looked down, and there, under the kindling, were two ten-gallon cans of petrol!

"I knew it must be there!" he cried to himself. He was down on his knees in a moment, shaking the cans to make sure that they were full. One had never been broached; the other was nearly half full. And this second can was the one he took. That would be more than enough to get the monoplane back to headquarters, and there was no reason for burdening himself with too great a load. He picked up the can, and at the same moment his heart leaped up into his throat, for overhead there came the sound of heavy footsteps. For a moment he stood as if paralyzed, listening.

The footsteps continued; guttural voices sounded,—the voices of Germans. It was impossible to distinguish what they were saying; and it made no difference, in any case. The only point that mattered was that they were there; that they blocked the only means Frank had of getting away

with the precious petrol he had so luckily found.

He was safe enough personally. Even if they were led to come down into the cellar the chances were all in favor of his being able to conceal himself. What he feared was that some use was to be made of the place, and that the men whose voices he heard would stay there, thus preventing him from getting out of the building and so getting the petrol to Greene. It was more than possible, he thought, that the German commander, knowing that the presence of his troops in the woods had been discovered, would decide to use this place for headquarters.

And what he could hear confirmed this idea. There was a continual tramping overhead. Men came and went. That seemed to indicate that the occupation was to be permanent. He racked his brains for some means of escape. Windows there were none in the cellar. He found no trace of a trap door, such as there would have been in almost any American cellar. And then the saving thought came to him like a flash. He debated for

a moment, then decided that the risk was worth taking. First he took his can of gasoline to the steps. Then he poured a little into a broken bottle, and poured this, in turn, on the wood under which he had found the cans. He dragged the full can of petrol to the other side of the cellar. And then, very deliberately, he set a match to the gasoline soaked wood and retreated to the steps.

The fire he had started blazed up at once, owing to the petrol. And at once a thick, acrid smoke filled the place. He was well up on the stairs, and thus safe from being choked. But he was in danger should the Germans come down, though even so, since the steps were wide, there was a chance for him. But he did not expect them to come down. He thought the smoke would drive them out, since as nearly as he could judge his fire was directly under the room in which the most of the commotion upstairs was taking place.

It was not long before he heard coughing upstairs, the first sign that the smoke was doing its work. By that time a brisk fire was burning. It

had run up the posts to the beams that formed the chief support of the room above, and to his delight Frank saw that these burned far more fiercely and quickly than he had hoped. Plainly the wood was old and dry.

Above, as the fire spread, louder cries succeeded the coughing. And then came the crucial test by which his daring experiment had to stand or fall. Some one opened the door at the head of the stairs. Now, if ever, he was to be discovered! But as the door was opened the smoke was drawn up, and the German who had come to it jumped back.

"The whole place is burning! Get out!" he cried, in German. "There may be explosive spirits still down there!"

He slammed the door shut, and Frank heard running footsteps above. He waited until there were no more, and then, almost overcome by the smoke, slipped through the door. No one was left in the hallway into which he came. The place was full of smoke. He did not venture to the front door by which he had entered, but, still dragging

his can of petrol, went to the back. Going through the kitchen, he found another door, as he had been sure he would and in a moment he was drinking in the cool, fresh air. The rain that was beating down on him now was welcome.

Just as he reached the open there was a sharp explosion behind him, and he looked back, to see the windows on the ground floor glowing. That was the other can of petrol, as he could guess readily enough. At once he ducked, and, running low, got well to one side of the house. Then, just as a great burst of flame lighted up the whole scene, he dropped to the ground, and lay peering toward the road in front of the inn.

A dozen officers and as many men, all in the German uniform, with the spiked helmets that made them so unmistakable, were in the road, staring at the burning house. And it was not until Frank saw how angry one of the officers was that he realized what a useful idea his had really been. Now detection of the Germans was certain. Investigation was almost certain to be made of a

fire in a building so far out of the range of the German artillery as this. And so, even if neither he nor Captain Greene got back in time, the torch he had lighted, meaning only to secure his own escape, was likely to prove a death blow to the German hopes of secrecy.

Frank could not hear what the Germans were saying, but he had no intention of getting closer in an attempt to do so. Instead, having satisfied himself that there were no pickets behind the burning inn, he began crawling cautiously to the rear. It was a difficult task, especially so because of the petrol, which was no light burden. But he managed to get well out of the lighted zone and then he decided that it would be safe to straighten up and walk along.

As he went along the burning building served him well. It gave him a fixed landmark from which he could lay his course to the spot where he had left the monoplane and Captain Greene. By looking back from time to time he could correct his course, when he was crossing fields. And so

without the guidance of roads, and partly to make better time and partly to avoid stray German pickets, he chose to stay away almost entirely from the roads and go across country.

From the fields in which they had descended to the inn the distance, as nearly as he had been able to guess it, was about a mile. He shortened this somewhat on the return trip. And he was within a quarter of a mile of the meeting place when he became suddenly conscious of something that was not just right. At first he was tempted to stop, but he overcame the temptation. The thing that had warned him of a possible danger was a trifling noise, yet one that was out of the ordinary. What the noise was he could scarcely have told. Perhaps the breaking of a twig, perhaps the slipping of a foot along a suddenly encountered patch of mud. At any rate he was sure that he had been followed.

He slowed down and now he could hear, or thought he could, the heavy breathing of at least two men. He was not certain of this; he was wil-

ling to admit to himself that he might be fancying it.

"If they're after me, why don't they take me?" he wondered to himself. But the explanation came to him almost as soon as he had asked himself the question. Whoever was following him could reason from the sight of the can of petrol he was carrying that he was going to some definite place where that petrol was wanted. And it would require no great stretch of the imagination for his trailers to decide that he must be carrying fuel to the aeroplane that had worked such havoc with the German plans.

"They think I'll lead them to the 'plane," he thought. Half a dozen plans for misleading them came to him. But none seemed practicable. Frank was intensely dogged in his determination to accomplish anything he had set out to do. The idea of giving up now, even to mislead his pursuers and so save Captain Greene from capture, was repugnant to him. He wanted to foil the men behind him—unless, as was possible, he only im-

agined that they were behind him—and still do what he had set out to do, which was in this instance to refill that empty petrol tank on the monoplane.

It was the purely accidental movement of putting his hand into his pocket to dry it off that gave him the idea. It met the pocket flashlight Captain Greene had given him, and at once he remembered a use for it of which the aviator had told him. To follow the plan did not mean that it would succeed, but it represented a chance, anyhow. And so when he came to the fence which he remembered climbing on his way from the monoplane, he stopped on the top rail, having pushed his can of petrol through first. In the field now immediately in front of him, but far away still, on the other side of the field, lay the monoplane. He could not see it in the driving rain but he knew that it was there.

There too would be Greene, waiting for him, and in all probability at this moment straining his eyes watching for his return. On that de-

pended his chance of success in the plan that had come to him. On that, and on Greene's presence of mind and quick-wittedness.

So, still astride of the top rail, he began signalling with his pocket flashlight. He spelled out his message in Morse code, using a long pressure of the releasing switch for the dash and a short one for the dot. Word by word he spelled out his message, telling that he suspected that at least two Germans were trailing him. And at the end he signalled a request that if he had understood, Greene should wait a half minute and then imitate an owl's cry. He chose an owl because he had heard one or two earlier in the night. And he added that if he got the signal he would keep on heading for the monoplane. He suggested nothing to Greene; the rest was decidedly up to the aviator. Frank had done his share.

If there were Germans actually within sight of him, they did not attempt to interfere with him while he was flashing his message. But he had reckoned confidently that they would not. He

was sure that he had not betrayed the fact that he knew he was being followed, and they would naturally suppose that this stop for signalling was part of a pre-arranged plan. He now dropped to the ground, picked up his can and took two or three quick steps. Then he stopped abruptly and was sure that he heard a footstep behind him. He grinned to himself, and just then the hoot of an owl sounded. Then he went on.

"I'll make it easier for them," he said. "Perhaps they wouldn't like to follow me right across the field!"

So he skirted the fence and the hedge at the side, and went around three sides of the field to reach the monoplane. And, as soon as it was in sight, all his suspicions were verified, for from behind there came a sharp exclamation in German, and he was told to stop, just as a heavy hand gripped his shoulder.

"Ja, we were right!" exclaimed one man in German. "There is their aeroplane! Now for the other—"

He never finished the sentence. Instead, he threw up his hands and pitched forward, just as a revolver cracked sharply in the silent night. With an oath the man who held Frank threw him aside, at the same moment shooting in the direction of the flash of Greene's pistol. But the Englishman's revolver spoke at the same moment, and he too fell. Frank's ruse had saved the day!

CHAPTER XIV

MENTIONED IN DISPATCHES!

"Keep back!" called Greene sharply to Frank.

His revolver still in his hand, he flashed the powerful light Frank had used in the monoplane into the faces of the two Germans. They lay groaning within a foot or two of one another.

"No tricks!" said Greene, sharply. "I don't want to finish you, but I'll shoot again if you make a move, except you can throw away your revolvers."

He spoke in German, and both of the wounded men obeyed. Frank was immensely relieved. He had been afraid that they had been killed, and the thought had sickened him. He realized fully that it would have been in accordance with the idea of war had Greene killed them both; that it would have been no more than his duty. And yet he was more than glad that they were alive and, so far as he could judge at that moment, not badly

hurt or not dangerously wounded, at least.

"Fill that tank with the petrol," said Greene to Frank, "but leave a little in the can."

Frank obeyed, wondering why the order was given. Then Greene pushed the monoplane along the ground for some distance until it was in a favorable position to take the air.

"All right! Get in!" he said. "Strap yourself in. Know how the straps go? Right! I'm going to make a bonfire. It'll bring someone to help those poor chaps. I don't want them to have to lie here all night unless they have to."

He took the can which Frank had almost emptied and poured what gasoline remained on the ground that had been protected from the rain by one wing of the monoplane. Then he flung a match into the now highly inflammable stubble, and a flame leaped up at once, lighting the monoplane and the two wounded Germans. In a moment more he was in his place and the monoplane was plunging along the ground. Then it took the air and rose swiftly to a safe height. And then

for the first time there was a chance for explanations.

"By Jove, how did you come to think of flashing that message to me?" cried Greene. "That was an idea! I almost gave it all away by answering before I realized what you were telling me. What was that fire I saw? Looked to me like the very place you said you were going to."

So Frank explained.

"Oh, splendid—my word, splendid!" cried Greene. "I fancy we'll find they've started this way already. Hullo—yes, by Jove, there come some of our fellows now! See, over there to the right? Aeroplanes—gone to spot those Johnnies. They didn't wait for us to come back!"

He dropped to a bare hundred feet of elevation now and in a moment Frank could see why. Below them a mass of cavalry was in motion.

"There they go!" cried Greene. "Your beacon gave them the line. The general must have decided that was confirmation enough."

Now came a shouting from below, and Greene

answered it by swooping down to a landing in the field. An officer put his horse to the wall and rode up beside them.

"Captain Greene, by any chance?" he called, peering at them.

"Yes, colonel," said Greene, saluting. "The Germans are in a clump of woods on the Amiens road. In an angle of that road and the one from LaFere, rather. I don't know the exact strength, but have reason to believe about five thousand."

"There's no doubt about their being there, though?"

"None at all, sir. They shot a hole in my tank, and I had to wait to get enough essence to come back. All mine leaked before I could make a landing to plug the bullet hole. Did you start on the sight of that burning house?"

"Yes. The staff couldn't see why a house should be burning unless there were Germans about. Very well. Report back to headquarters, captain. They're waiting for you."

"Very well, sir."

"I thought so," he said to Frank, when they were in the air again. "You'll hear more of this night's work before you've done, my boy. There's a deal of gratitude due you. But I'd like to know what those Dutchmen were up to!"

Five minutes more saw them landed safely at headquarters, and it was only a few moments before they were in the presence of General Smith-Derrien. He listened to Greene's brief report in silence.

"There is more to be told of what my passenger and observer did, sir," he added, when he had sketched the essential facts. "I will make a written report of that direct to you."

"Do so," said the general. "You have done very well. Had it not been for the information we have obtained in this way, the whole headquarters staff might have been captured. The Germans evidently learned, through spies, of the orders that had been issued for continuing the retirement, and had slipped this force through to intercept the staff. I have been able to turn the

tables on them, however. They will have trouble, I think, in escaping the forces sent against them."

For some time heavy firing had been heard in the direction of the woods where the Germans had lain. Now this died away. General Smith-Derrien glanced significantly at a colonel of his staff and permitted himself the luxury of a smile, a rare one for him in those days of the retreat.

Just then the telephone on his table rang. The nearest officer answered, listening attentively for a moment.

"Colonel Mewbray using the field telephone, sir," he said to the general. "It's been connected with our wires here. He reports that the horse artillery completely surrounded the wood in which the Germans were quartered, and shelled the woods for ten minutes. After that the Germans ceased firing, and when we played searchlights a dozen white flags were shown. The German commander, General von Garnst, surrendered to avoid a further useless sacrifice of lives."

The general nodded.

"My compliments to Colonel Mewbray," he said. "Ask him to convey my thanks to Brigadier-General Lannin. The German prisoners will be placed on trains at once and sent to Paris, through Amiens. The staff will prepare at once to take the new position as indicated in the order of to-night. Orderly!"

"Yes, sir!" said a private, stepping forward.

"My motor is to be ready in five minutes."

"Yes, sir."

The orderly went to transmit the order. Then the general turned to Frank and held out his hand.

"I shall see to it that you and your companion Boy Scout are mentioned in dispatches," he said. "I shall also see to it that your scoutmaster is informed of your excellent work, and shall request him to give you the highest possible promotion for distinguished services!"

CHAPTER XV

THE RETREAT

Frank felt that he was dismissed, and a gentle pressure on his arm from Captain Greene made him sure of it. The aviator went out with him, and when they were outside he slapped him on the back.

"Well, you've got a right to feel proud of yourself!" he said. "And the general doesn't begin to know all you did. He will, though, as soon as he gets my report. I'll write that directly because there's no telling what will happen any time I go up. You've seen something of how it goes in a monoplane."

"I wonder what I'm to do now," said Frank.

"Go away from here as quickly as you can," said Greene, with a laugh. "I can tell you that much. That's what we've been doing ever since they smashed us at Mons, in Belgium. You see those beggars creep out, trying to get around us.

The Frenchmen made a bad guess at the beginning, and sent too many men to Alsace, and so this chap Von Kluck had enough men to threaten to surround us. But his turn's coming!"

"When?" asked Frank.

"Ask me something easy! Before very long, though, I think. We'll be south of Amiens by to-morrow. We've got to wait until we get enough men. But there's a surprise coming to the Germans. If I told you any more I'd be shot at daybreak for betraying military secrets. Good luck, young 'un! Sorry you're not going to be with us in the flying corps!"

"Good-bye," said Frank.

Then he went to look for Henri, and found him in the same room in which they had first been received by Major Cooper. Henri started up with a cry of delight at seeing him and embraced him, in the French fashion, to the huge amusement of the Englishmen present and Frank's own disgust and embarrassment. But he tried to hide how he felt, for he knew that Henri was only doing what

he had been brought up to regard as the proper thing, and he would not have hurt his chum's feelings for the world.

"You two youngsters have got to get back to Amiens," said the major. "For one thing because the Germans will be here as soon as we get out, and for another because I want you to take some dispatches to the French staff there. Can either of you drive a motor?"

"I can," said Henri, proudly.

"Really? All right. I'd rather not spare a man. You will take these dispatches in the same containers in which they were brought, and deliver them to Colonel Menier, if he is still in Amiens. If not, to Major Fremille. You will also turn over the motor car to the French authorities there. Shall you stay in Amiens after that, even if the French leave, which they will?"

"Yes, sir, unless there is something we can do elsewhere."

"I rather think you'll be able to do more there than anywhere else, if the Germans don't drive

The Frenchmen made a bad guess at the beginning, and sent too many men to Alsace, and so this chap Von Kluck had enough men to threaten to surround us. But his turn's coming!"

"When?" asked Frank.

"Ask me something easy! Before very long, though, I think. We'll be south of Amiens by to-morrow. We've got to wait until we get enough men. But there's a surprise coming to the Germans. If I told you any more I'd be shot at daybreak for betraying military secrets. Good luck, young 'un! Sorry you're not going to be with us in the flying corps!"

"Good-bye," said Frank.

Then he went to look for Henri, and found him in the same room in which they had first been received by Major Cooper. Henri started up with a cry of delight at seeing him and embraced him, in the French fashion, to the huge amusement of the Englishmen present and Frank's own disgust and embarrassment. But he tried to hide how he felt, for he knew that Henri was only doing what

he had been brought up to regard as the proper thing, and he would not have hurt his chum's feelings for the world.

"You two youngsters have got to get back to Amiens," said the major. "For one thing because the Germans will be here as soon as we get out, and for another because I want you to take some dispatches to the French staff there. Can either of you drive a motor?"

"I can," said Henri, proudly.

"Really? All right. I'd rather not spare a man. You will take these dispatches in the same containers in which they were brought, and deliver them to Colonel Menier, if he is still in Amiens. If not, to Major Fremille. You will also turn over the motor car to the French authorities there. Shall you stay in Amiens after that, even if the French leave, which they will?"

"Yes, sir, unless there is something we can do elsewhere."

"I rather think you'll be able to do more there than anywhere else, if the Germans don't drive

you out. But you'll hear of that from the French officer you report to. By the way, when I spoke of the convoy that resisted a Uhlan attack, you didn't tell me you'd had anything to do with that. Why not?"

"We didn't, sir," said Frank, surprised. "We got away just as the fighting began."

"Yes, and sorry to go, too, I'll wager! Captain Hardy reported that it was your quickness and intelligence that saved him, and enabled him to get help up in time to save the convoy. Something about the hands of a clock you saw moving, eh?"

"That was nothing, sir," said Frank. "I just happened to see that they'd moved, when a minute before the clock had seemed to have stopped."

"Maybe it was nothing, but we hadn't got on to it before. And if they've been doing that at all steadily it accounts for the way they've been able to drop shells on to what we supposed were concealed positions. They shelled the house the staff was in two days ago. We're giving them a good fight, but they beat us pretty badly when it

comes to spying. If we had a few more people with eyes as quick as yours, we'd be better off. Come on, I'll take you out and see you started."

As they reached the street they saw General Smith-Derrien climbing into a great automobile that started off at once, moving south toward Paris. What little they had seen of him had already made them conceive a great admiration for the silent British commander, who only a few days later was to be honored as the first brilliant figure of the war on the allied side. It was for his very conduct of this retreat that Field Marshal French, the British commander-in-chief, selected him for special mention in his dispatches.

They had to wait a few minutes while Major Cooper attended to the details of getting a car for them.

"Oh, Frank," said Henri, wistfully, "I wish I'd been the one to go! Though I wouldn't have done so well, I'm sure of that."

"Nonsense! You'd have done as well, and better," said Frank.

"No! But think of what you have done for France, for what is done for the English now is done for France as well. I am glad the English are fighting with us now, instead of against us. I—"

Major Cooper's return interrupted him.

"Here's your car coming now," he said. "You'll have to take a long way around. There are troops, or will be, on all the direct roads, and, besides, bridges are being blown up fast. Take the road that leads to Abbeville, over toward the sea. Use your own judgment about when you turn south, but keep moving toward the west until you are very close to Abbeville. After that you will have a fairly clear course. We haven't any reason to think that the Germans are in that direction at all as yet, though where they may be to-morrow no one knows. I needn't tell you to keep your eyes open. But if you do run into Germans, don't try to get away. There's very little chance of their finding the papers you carry, and, if they do, it is not important enough for us to

want you to run any great risk. If you see them coming, hide at once. The motor doesn't matter."

Henri took the driver's seat and Frank sprang in beside him. And Henri, feeling that he had been pushed a little into the background, started the motor at once. He really could drive a car, having learned from his father years before, and he soon showed, when he had made himself familiar with the details of his machine, that he was to be trusted with it. And so, with a blast of his horn, he made a quick turn and sent the car roaring into the night. That was only to show off, however, for in a moment he muffled his engine, and the car spun along almost in silence, the motor purring evenly, as if to show that it was in perfect trim and ready to give the car all the speed that was needed.

The rain had stopped by this time, but the roads were still muddy and greasy, and at first, too, there was a good deal of traffic. Guns and men were moving, and, moreover, there was another

danger. The German guns had evidently moved up, and a shell fell near them once in a while, but not so near as to bother them.

After a few miles of travelling, however, they found the road freer, and found also that the sound of the rear guard engagement that was covering the British retreat was further off. Five miles saw them riding through fields where twinkling lights showed the presence of troops, and they were stopped by a French guard. The pass Major Cooper had given them got them through, and the soldiers laughed and chatted while an officer was examining it. These were fresh troops, hurriedly brought up to hold off the Germans while the exhausted British retired to new positions, and they were gay, light-hearted fellows. True, they had not yet been in action, but to Frank it seemed that they were likely to be jovial after they had heard bullets singing over their heads.

"They don't seem to feel bad," said Henri. "And it is the same with the English. They are retreating, and still they are cheerful."

"You say that as if it was something remarkable!" said Frank, with a laugh. "Of course they're cheerful. They've got faith in their leaders, and they know, I suppose, that a retreat is often necessary. They'll turn the tables before long."

"It seems strange to be where it is so quiet," said Frank, when they had finally passed beyond sound of the skirmishing on the extreme left of the allied line, formed by the French force through which they had passed. "I'm expecting to see Germans every time we make a turn."

"So am I," said Henri. "And why shouldn't we? If they are trying to turn the allied flank, we're as likely to see them in this direction as not."

"Look here," said Frank, "you're perfectly right. We haven't got orders to make particularly good time. Let's keep on right to Abbeville. That's at the mouth of the Somme. Then we can turn toward Boulogne. If there are Germans around here at all they'll be in that direction. We

might get some trace of their cavalry. Or we might do what we did before, strike some of their infantry. I don't think we're so likely to do that, though."

"We'll try it, anyhow," said Henri.

And so they turned toward St. Pol, instead of making the sharp turn at right angles that would have brought them to Amiens. Here there were traces, indeed, of a German invasion. Peasants, alarmed by the reports of Uhlans seen at Arras and near Boulogne, were in full flight.

"We needn't bother about that," said Frank. "Anything that these people know the intelligence department has found out. No troops advancing at all openly could get by the aeroplanes without being seen. And I think the railroad in this direction has been watched. I saw a lot of aeroplanes flying over this way this afternoon, and there would be more from Boulogne. There are English warships there, I've heard, and their naval flyers would cover this part of the country."

Suddenly Henri slowed down the car. He kept one hand on the wheel, the car moving slowly forward, but his gaze was fixed on the sky. Finally he stopped the car altogether.

"Look up there," he said, quietly, to Frank. "Do you see that light? First I thought it was a star. But there aren't any other stars, and now I'm sure it's moving. Do you see?"

He pointed, and Frank's eyes followed his finger.

"You're right," he said. "Hello! Now it's gone—no, there it is again! See, it flashes and then disappears! It's some sort of a signal from the air. Keep the car still."

He tried to follow the flashes of the light, hoping to read the message if it was in Morse code. But he soon found that it was not. And then Henri cried out sharply.

"If it's a signal, it's being answered from over there!" he said. "See, there's a light waving there. It looks as if it might be from the roof of a house. I—"

CHAPTER XVI

A DARING EXPLOIT

Frank leaped out.

"Turn the car around first," he said. Henri obeyed. "Now try your starter. Cut out the motor and then see if she starts quickly."

Henri, mystified, obeyed.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because when we want to start, we may have to do it in an awful hurry," said Frank. He searched the road for a moment. "Run her back a few feet to where that big tree is. It's darker there than anywhere else around here. All right, that's far enough. We'll have to take the chance of something coming along while we're gone and bumping into her but I don't believe there's much risk of that. Now, come on! And quiet! We've got to get up to that place without being seen."

Cautiously they approached the house. No lights showed in any of its windows; the place

looked deserted. Indeed, all around it were traces of hasty flight. It was a wayside inn, of a type common always in France, commoner than ever since the spread of the craze for automobiles and motor touring. Suddenly Frank stopped.

"Wait a minute for me," he said. "I've got to go back to the car. I ought to have thought of it before."

"What do you want?"

"Batteries. I saw a coil of wire in the car and I want that, too. And there must be batteries. A car like this would carry everything needed for small repairs, wouldn't it?"

"Yes. I think you'll find them under my seat."

Frank was back in less than five minutes.

"All right," he said. "I don't know whether we'll have time to do what I want or not, and whether I'll be able to do it, anyhow. But it's worth trying. Now come on past the house. Easy! This is the hardest part of it."

They slipped by. However, Frank uttered a suppressed exclamation as soon as they had done

so. Before them, on the right of the road was a field easily two or three times as large as the ordinary French field. As a rule the land in France is split up into very small sections, closely cultivated. But here was a cleared field as large as those commonly seen in England or America, with no fences for perhaps a quarter of a mile in any direction. Henri turned to look back at the inn.

"They're still signalling from there—and look! There are two lights now, instead of one, above!"

These lights were still some distance away. Frank studied them. Then he led the way into the field.

"I thought so!" he said, with suppressed triumph in his voice. "Do you see those barrels over there toward the inn? There's petrol in those—or I'll eat my shirt!"

"And if there is?" said Henri. "What then?"

"Can't you guess? What do you suppose those lights mean?"

"Aeroplanes?"

"Never! They wouldn't flash that way. They'd have to be in a different position entirely. No. Dirigibles!"

"Zeppelins?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps Parsevals or Schutte-Lanz airships. I think Parsevals, for they need gasoline. And Zeppelins could fly from Brussels or Liege, almost from Cologne—oh, I have it! That's why they need petrol!"

"Why?"

"They haven't flown over Belgium at all! They are from the sea!"

"Oh—so that they could come secretly, and not be seen as they passed over Belgium?"

"Yes. If they flew over Belgium they would have to cross some territory that the Germans do not hold, and word would go to Antwerp and from there to the army here. Now quickly! They will be here soon. They are coming nearer every minute."

They went to the barrels as fast as they dared. There was nearly a score of them, all close to-

gether. Each had a tap, and it was proof enough that they contained petrol to open the tap of one. The smell identified them beyond any doubt whatever.

"Come on, and help me dig a hole," said Frank. He dropped to his knees, and began scooping out the soft earth with his hands. Henri fell to with a will, though he was sadly puzzled. But when the hole had been dug to a depth of perhaps two feet, and Frank began to hollow out a trench toward the barrels he began to understand. And as soon as he did, he worked as hard as Frank himself, careless of torn finger nails and bleeding hands. They carried the trench to the foot of one of the barrels, and Frank turned the tap. The gasoline ran out into the trench, and flowed to the hole. Frank ran back to the hole.

"Stop it when I give the word," he said. "Now!"

Then he was busy with the copper wire he had brought from the automobile for several minutes. The wire had been carried either to repair cut

telegraph or telephone wires, or to serve as the conductor for a field system of lighting. But whatever its original purpose had been, Frank was thankful now that he had found it. He worked fast, and was satisfied at last.

"Now a little straw and a few twigs over the hole and the trench—and the sooner they come, the better!"

"Yes, the sooner, the better!" echoed Henri, tremendously excited, now that he understood, even if rather vaguely, what Frank planned. "Vive la France! A bas les Allemands!"

As they went back toward the road Frank trailed the wire behind him in two lengths. And when they reached the road, he dropped into the ditch, and was busy for some minutes.

"Now if it only works!" he said. "Perhaps it will; perhaps it won't. But it can't do any harm. That's certain."

"They're coming closer. I think I can see their shapes now—and there are two of them," said Henri. "Do you see?"

For a moment Frank could not. Henri's eyes were sharper than his. But then he did make out vaguely two immense shapes that were coming through the air. Soon, too, the faint hum of their powerful motors made itself heard.

"Zeppelins and big fellows, too," said Frank. "All the better!"

He wondered if his plan would work, and if he would be able to carry it out. If, in the final test, would he dare to do what he had tried to arrange? Time enough to think of that when the moment for decision came. And meanwhile there were a hundred things that might happen to ruin his plan. There was nothing to do now but wait. But every moment of waiting brought the climax nearer. The hum of the motors of the airships rose louder on the quiet air, broken only by the faint and distant mutter of the battle that was still being fought miles away. It sounded now like the buzzing of a swarm of bees, magnified a thousand times. And then the field was full of men, rushing from the inn. He wondered how they

could have been concealed there. But such wonder was idle, and he did not think of it. Instead he watched keenly. First one monstrous aerial battleship came to rest on the earth. At once the men in the field surrounded her, seizing the ropes that were flung out, and made her fast.

There was a good deal of noise. Men were calling in German of course. But soon order was restored, and the only voices were those giving commands. Suddenly Frank's face lighted up.

"Did you understand, Henri?" he said. "The men in the field are to be the crews for the fighting. They have sailed here with only enough men to steer them. And now all are ordered out, to stretch their legs!"

"Yes, I heard that order," said Henri.

"Now keep your eyes glued to them. What are they doing?"

They listened and watched intently.

"Just as I thought," said Frank. "See, they are going to fill the tanks. There, they are attaching hose. And they have a pump—they surely

must have a pump, to send the petrol uphill!"

Meanwhile the other airship had come down, on the other side of the barrels, and there as nearly as they could judge, the same procedure was carried out.

"Watch, Henri! Are they pumping?" cried Frank.

"Yes!" said Henri. "Now—now—now is your time, Francois!"

Frank hesitated the fraction of a second.

"If it meant killing them, I could not do it," he said, solemnly. "But they are all out of the airships. Now!"

On the word he closed the circuit he had made by connecting the loose ends of the wire he had carried from his petrol filled hole to the two batteries he had brought from the car. He had broken the circuit at the other end, leaving the two wires separated by the fraction of an inch, and cunningly held in place. The result was a spark—or would be, if he had not erred.

And he had made no mistake! For as he closed

the circuit, he saw a flash of flame at the spot where he and Henri had dug the hole into which the petrol had flowed from the barrel they had opened. The spark had fired the explosive gas that results when petrol is mixed with air. The flame ran along the shallow trench, and, amid a chorus of shrieks from the Germans who scattered in all directions, the fire reached the barrel. In a moment there was a loud explosion. The flame flew to the other barrels—the whole neighborhood of the barrels, owing to the mixture of the petrol and the air, was then filled with an explosive and inflammable gas.

There was a great flash of flame, broken by a dozen sharp reports as one barrel after another blew up.

And still, though the Germans were flying in all directions, plainly visible in the light of the blazing gasoline, the real success of Frank's plan hung in the balance. But then what he had calculated happened. The flame ran through the lines of hose. And a moment later two great

shafts of flame marked the spread of the fire to the helpless monsters of the air. There was no chance to save them. Indeed, even the Germans had no other thought than to save their own lives. Their raid, whatever its ultimate object, was ruined and two vessels of the great air fleet of the Kaiser were destroyed.

For a moment after the final catastrophe the two scouts stayed, caught by the wonder and the magnificence of the ruin they had wrought. But then Frank cried out,

"Come on! We haven't a moment to lose! They'll know that that was no accident! Some came running this way. They'll find the wires! And then they'll know. The wires will bring them here. Hurry!"

They began running desperately toward the automobile.

CHAPTER XVII

THE ESCAPE

Their one chance of escape, as they both realized fully, was to get back to their automobile before the Germans recovered themselves sufficiently to begin searching for those who had brought such swift and terrible disaster upon their enterprise. And so they made no effort to move quietly or secretly now. To do so would have meant delay and delay was what they could not afford. The distance seemed far greater than when they had first traversed it. It seemed that they would never pass the house which the Germans had used as a base. But finally they reached it. And as they did so a door burst open, and they saw a light within.

A man, with the cap of a German officer, though otherwise he wore civilian clothes, came rushing out, tugging at his pistol. He had heard them running. By some bad chance, then, there

had been a man—a German—left in the inn!

"Stop!" he cried, furiously.

But they kept on running. He could not see them, dazzled as he was by coming from the lighted house into the deep darkness of the road. But he was in front of them, and they slowed up, instinctively, though they still ran. And then they came into the light of the door. He started back.

"Kinder!" he cried. "Children!"

It was the exclamation of the Uhlan who had stopped them in the afternoon. But now it was uttered in a vastly different tone. The German was beside himself with rage. Perhaps he had had some heavy share of responsibility for the safety of the Zeppelins. But whether that were so or not, he was plainly maddened by the sight of the boys. He could scarcely have understood how completely they were responsible, but the way they were running and the direction whence they came proved only too clearly that they had had some hand in it.

"Stop, Henri!" cried Frank, suddenly. "We can't get away. We surrender!"

They stopped. Frank was obeying the order Major Cooper had given him. Perhaps, had he been alone, he would have risked a further attempt to escape. But there was no doubt that the German meant to shoot, and he could not expose Henri to the risk.

They stopped full in the path of light that came from the open door of the inn. Behind them, in the road, voices were raised. It was plain that their wires had been followed, and that others were in pursuit. And, after all, Frank felt they could afford to grin at being made prisoners now. They had accomplished a great feat. Even if they were caught, that was to their credit.

And then suddenly he gave a cry of horror. Henri was a little ahead of him for he had not been able to stop as abruptly as Frank. And the German officer, too furious, perhaps, to think of what he was doing, raised his pistol and fired point-blank at the French boy! He fired—but there

came from his pistol not a sharp report, but only the dull click as the hammer fell. Twice more he pulled the trigger. But something was wrong. He had made a fatal error—his revolver was unloaded.

But it was only by the luckiest of accidents that Henri was still alive. Frank had seen the murderous attempt, and now rage mastered him for the moment.

"You coward!" he shrieked. He flung himself at the German officer, who was trying frantically to get at his cartridges. So sudden was the attack that he was taken utterly by surprise. Before he could defend himself, Frank was wrenching his arm. A moment more, and the German officer squealed like a frightened pig, for Frank had succeeded in getting a hammer lock on him. He pulled at the revolver with his other hand, and at last the German, to escape a broken arm, had to loosen his grip. Even a weakling can cripple the strongest man if he once gets that hold. And Frank, in his rage at the cowardly thing he had

seen, was almost a match for the full grown man in any case.

As soon as he got the revolver he let go of the German's arm. But before the officer could move, Frank had clubbed the pistol and struck him sharply on the head. He went down like a log.

"Run, Henri, run!" he cried. "They're coming up behind us! Run for the car!"

Behind them, indeed, the footsteps of running men were plainly to be heard. A shot rang out, but both boys had turned instinctively to the side of the road and were running low in the ditch beside the highway. They could not be seen, and the firing ceased. It seemed that most of the men were unarmed, or carried revolvers at the most. Had there been rifles behind them, they would have had no chance. But as it was, they reached their car and leaped in. Henri threw the switch of the electric starter, the motor leaped into throbbing life, and they were off.

Behind them more shots were fired, but the aim was wild. And they sped away, at fifty miles

an hour, pursued only by a few vain revolver bullets, and by a chorus of shouts and yells of rage and execration.

"The coward!" stormed Frank. He had never been so angry in his life. "He might have killed you, Harry! And just because he was in a rage over what had happened to the airships! He didn't even know that you'd had anything to do with it—not positively! And we'd already surrendered."

Henri laughed—and he meant the laugh. It was not affectation. He had faced his danger in the true spirit of the Frenchman, who is as brave in action as any man in the world.

"Eh, well!" he said. "He did not shoot me, so what does it matter? That was a fine crack on the head you gave him! He will remember us, I think, next time he sees us."

Frank shuddered a little.

"I hope not!" he said. "Or, that if he does, he will be a prisoner himself, and won't be able to try to get even."

Frank remembered the look of sheer devilish rage in the eyes of the German. It was not pleasant to think that they might meet again.

"If it is to be, it will be," said Henri. "I bear him no grudge! He had cause to be angry—ma foi, yes! The Kaiser will not say pretty things when he hears of what we did to-night, Francois!"

"No!" Frank laughed. "I wonder where those airships were meant to go? Paris? They could have done terrible damage. Perhaps they were to attack the army—to lie behind its course, knowing that our aeroplanes would be scouting on the front. They might have made it harder than ever to retreat in good order. But I think they would have gone to Paris. I think that they would have been there before daylight."

"And now—pouf!" said Henri. "What is left of them? Not so much as would fill a barrel!"

Once all danger of pursuit was past, Henri had slowed down the speed of the car. Both scouts were thoroughly tired out by this time. They had had a strenuous day, and a night that merited the

description of strenuous even more fully than the day. And now that danger seemed to lie behind them, and a clear road to safety in front, their weariness was realized fully for the first time.

They could hardly have escaped the Germans, had any lain between Abbeville and Amiens. But none were there, as it turned out. The road was clear and open before them, and the car rolled along smoothly.

"The firing seems to be moving now—moving to the southeast," said Henri, once.

"I think our left wing is being drawn in a little. That will tighten up the line. But it gives the Germans still more chance to get around the wing."

"We can bring up French troops to meet them, Frank. There is the garrison of Paris—nearly five hundred thousand men. They have not struck a blow yet. But if the Germans come too near, they will be brought up to the first line."

"I believe that's what the French plan is, Harry!" said Frank. "Yes, why not? To lead

the Germans on and then take the risk of leaving Paris defended only by its forts, and try a new flanking movement of their own. Do you see? A new army, which could outflank the Germans while they thought they were outflanking us!"

The thought cheered them up wonderfully. It made it possible for them to bear the sight of Amiens, left without a single soldier of the republic, when they arrived.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

The days that followed the return of Frank and Henri to Amiens were busy but uneventful ones. They had found a few staff officers at the abandoned headquarters, including Colonel Menier, to whom they had made their report and turned over the automobile. He had thanked them heartily, having heard already of their work. And when he was told of the destruction of the Zeppelins he had embraced them both.

"We had heard already of that," he said. "Only of the burning of the ships, not of how it was done. You have done well for France, mes braves! Wait! You shall not find France ungrateful. I go to Paris from here, to make reports. I shall make one concerning you, to those in authority. And—who knows?"

He pinched their ears, that gesture loved of French soldiers since the days of the great Na-

poleon, of whom his officers said that when he pinched their ears he conferred an honor they valued more highly than the cross of the Legion d'Honneur.

After the departure of the last officers of the staff, Amiens took on a new aspect. The thunder of guns, even the rolling of rifle fire, was plainly to be heard now in the streets. In the distance—and not a great distance, either—the smoke of a dozen burning villages was to be seen to the north and east. It was so that the Germans marked their advance, steady, relentless. Henri exclaimed in fury at the sight.

"These barbarians of Germans!" he cried. "Burn and kill—and not soldiers alone!"

"It tears my heart-strings to see all this wanton destruction indulged in by the foe," said Frank. "What then must be the feelings of the French as they watch their villages being so ruthlessly burned! But some day, somehow, Henri, our chance will come and the French will sweep back into this territory, a

victorious host. Not for long will it be in the power of our foe!"

Every day Amiens expected the incursion of the Germans, but day followed day and still the enemy did not come. Frank and Henri stayed in the Martin house alone. The servants had gone; Madame Martin had respected their fears of the Prussians, and had made other arrangements for them. So the two scouts camped out there, and Henri invited many of the other scouts to share their quarters in relays. The house was open, too, to any refugees who cared to use it, but by this time the country to the north that was in danger of German raids had been swept clear, and Amiens was no longer a gathering place. It was in itself too much exposed.

The smoke of burning villages rose now to the south, toward Paris. The retreat was still on, it seemed. And while they waited patiently, since there was nothing else to do, for the coming of the Germans, there was much work for the Boy Scouts to do. It was routine work now, very different

from the exciting labors that had fallen to the share of Frank and Henri on the day of their trip to Le Cateau. When Henri became restless and impatient, as he sometimes did, Frank soothed him.

"We are still serving France," he said. "There are no more soldiers in Amiens. There are a few police, and those are old men, since the young gendarmes have gone to join their regiments. But Monsieur le Maire knows that he can call upon us."

The military authorities, before completing the evacuation of Amiens, had given strict orders that if the Germans came there was to be no resistance. And in order to enforce this rule, the mayor detailed the few remaining police and the Boy Scouts to make a house-to-house canvas, warning the citizens, and collecting all firearms that might be found. The scouts worked in pairs on this duty, and Frank and Henri always went together.

"In Belgium," one of them always explained, in making the demand that the arms be given up,

"Louvain and other towns were destroyed, so that not one stone remained upon another. And always the Germans made the excuse that shots had been fired on their men from the houses. Here in Amiens we must save our cathedral and the other famous buildings. When the Germans come it will not be for long; soon they will be in retreat before the armies of France and England."

Many gave up their guns reluctantly. But nearly all did give them up, and whenever the scouts had reason to think that any were being concealed, they made a special report on the house, and policemen returned to make a search.

And this wise planning had much to do with saving the town. The Germans came at last. At first a single squadron of Uhlans, in command of a young lieutenant, rode in. Frank and Henri saw them passing their house and they mounted bicycles at once, and followed them.

"They've nerve," admitted Henri, reluctantly. "See with what arrogance they sit their horses! They might be riding into a German city in-

stead of one in which everyone who sees them hates them!"

"Yes, they've nerve," agreed Frank.

There could be no question of the fact. The little squadron of troopers, almost swallowed up already in the crowd of curious ones who followed the slow movement of the horses, rode on, seemingly deaf to the mutters of execration that rose, especially from the women. Not a man turned his face from the front even to scowl at the townspeople. They rode on, eyes unswerving. Outside the Hotel de Ville they stopped. A bugler blew a fanfare, and Monsieur le Maire, in his robes of office, appeared on the steps. A great cheer from the people greeted him. He bowed gravely to the Uhlan lieutenant, who saluted stiffly.

"I demand the surrender of the town of Amiens, in the name of his Majesty the Kaiser and of the German Empire," said the lieutenant, in excellent French. "You, Monsieur le Maire, will consider yourself my prisoner. You will be held responsible for the conduct of the inhabitants. Any at-

tack on German troops will be sternly punished. If the inhabitants of Amiens behave in a peaceable and orderly fashion they will not be harmed. Payment will be made for any private property required by our forces. A brigade of infantry will march in this afternoon. Quarters must be found for the troops, numbering nearly eight thousand men. You will be informed later of the requisition the town will be required to fill, in money and in supplies. For the present you are required to clear this square, where my men will remain."

The mayor bowed.

"My orders are to make no resistance," he said. "I bow to the inevitable, regretting that we are not permitted to defend ourselves to the death. Amiens will keep its faith. No attack will be made, since that would mean treachery. I will order the gendarmes and the Boy Scouts to clear the square."

Frank and Henri were of great assistance in doing this work, Frank taking the lead, since

no patrol leader happened to be in evidence. They and the police soon drove the people back, and the Uhlans dismounted. There, in the public square, used as a market place, they proceeded to cook a meal, making a fire in the street. From the sides of the square the people watched them sullenly. But there was no demonstration, since both the police and the scouts had explained that anything of the sort was likely to mean the execution of the mayor, who was within the power of the enemy.

As soon as the public curiosity to see the hated invaders had been somewhat satisfied, the people were urged to go to their homes, and by mid afternoon the streets were deserted. Then began the entrance of the real force of occupation. At the head rode a general of brigade, a sombre, stern-eyed man, accompanied by his staff. And behind him marched thousands of green-gray German infantry keeping step with a marvelous precision. These men had been fighting hard, but they looked fresh and trim. And as they marched they sang,

raising their deep voices in a splendid, thrilling chorus.

Fly, Eagle, Fly, they sang as they marched into town. And then they gave way to the magnificent hymn of Martin Luther, the battle song of the Protestant nations in the Thirty Years' War, the battle song of Prussia ever since that time, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God!*

Henri watched them as they marched by, tears in his eyes. Finally he could suppress the thought no longer, and he turned to Frank with:

"They have said that Germany has fine soldiers, but they are not like our men! There's all the difference in the world between them — and that difference will bring victory to our banners. Our men fight for right; these men fight because they think it their duty."

"Even though they are the foe, I hope there will be no shooting at them here. If there is, they will show no mercy, I am sure of that," said Frank.

"Amiens has pledged its honor," replied Henri quietly. "They are safe here. Will they harm Monsieur le Maire? Oh, do you think they will harm him?"

"No, I think not if there is no resistance offered. I wonder if any will be quartered at your house, Henri?"

"I hope not," said Henri, flushing.

A change, as it turned out, was made in that plan. The general in command of the brigade, who proclaimed himself within an hour of his arrival as military governor of Amiens, decided to keep his men under canvas. Tents sprang up like mushrooms in the parks and open spaces. Amiens was required to furnish great quantities of foodstuffs—bread, flour, wine, meat. But the troops were not quartered in the houses. And by nightfall the town seemed to have settled down peacefully to the new conditions. German aeroplanes were flying constantly overhead; officers came in, and more troops.

"Amiens is again the headquarters of an army

corps," said Frank. He was suffering almost as keenly as Henri, but he did not mean to let his chum brood upon the disaster that had overtaken his home. And, after all, it might have been worse. He thought of Louvain and other Belgian cities.

That night Amiens was a German city. Trains passed through continually now, bearing troops; some, returning, carried wounded, whose groans resounded in the silence. And in the distance to the south, toward Paris, the roar of guns seemed louder again.

CHAPTER XIX

RECOGNITION!

Even the enemy, the hated Germans, found that the Boy Scouts were useful. There was constant danger of an outbreak, and the Germans had no desire to destroy Amiens. Had they been attacked from the houses, they would have lost heavily; in house-to-house fighting civilians, battling at close range, can inflict great damage on the best of regular troops. Such an outbreak would have meant the killing and the wounding of hundreds of German soldiers. The punishment would have been terrible, indeed, but that would not have brought a single Prussian back to life—a single Bavarian, rather, since these were Bavarian troops.

The Boy Scouts served as intermediaries between the Germans and the French civil authorities. They carried messages, and, at the order of the mayor, they submitted themselves to the

orders of the German staff when it was necessary to explain a new decree to the citizens. They had many other things to do, also. It was largely the scouts who saw to the gathering of the supplies requisitioned by the Germans. The enemy had been inexorable in this respect; they set a definite time limit for the filling of every requisition they made, and it was well understood that drastic measures would be taken were they not satisfied.

Each day a new group of hostages was taken into the Hotel de Ville, now occupied as headquarters by the German staff, rather than the buildings formerly used by the Second Corps d'Armee of France. These hostages, it was explained, would be shot at once if orders were not obeyed or if Germans were attacked. There were many irksome rules. Every citizen was required to salute a German officer whenever he saw him. Lights must be out at a certain hour each night, and after that hour any citizen found in the streets without a permit was liable to arrest and execu-

tion without trial. They were under martial rule.

But always the sound of heavy firing in the southeast continued.

"I really believe the great battle is being fought at last, Henri!" said Frank. "We have heard that firing now for three days. It comes from the direction of the Marne. There is another thing. Since yesterday no troop trains have gone south through Amiens."

"But empty trains go through!" cried Henri. "And they come back, loaded with German wounded! You are right, Francois! We have begun to drive the Prussians back to the Rhine!"

News they had none. All Amiens was cut off from the world. Whatever the German invaders knew they kept strictly to themselves. It was only by such inferences as they could draw from the sound of firing in the direction of Paris and by the passage of trains through the city that they were able to form any opinion at all.

"I feel sure that there's a real battle going on," said Frank. "The firing is too heavy and too

continuous for a rear guard action. But as to who is winning, we can't tell. Sometimes the firing seems to be a little nearer again, but that might be because of the wind. And as for the trains that are going through, that doesn't really mean anything. They might have decided to send troops to the front by another railway. They control the line through Rheims, too."

But the morning after they had decided that there was no real way to tell what was happening, something definite did come up. Nearly all the troops in Amiens moved south. Only a few hundred remained, enough to garrison the town and control the railway, since there seemed no danger of an allied raid. But the fact that the other troops were being sent up to the front indicated that the fighting was assuming a character far more desperate than the Germans had expected.

"They must be fighting on the line of the river Marne," said Frank. "You see, during that long retreat, there was time to entrench there. And open field entrenchments seem to be better than

fortified places. Look at how quickly Namur fell, when everyone thought it would hold the Germans back for days."

"The country there is difficult, too," said Henri. "My father said once that it was there that the garrison of Paris should have fought first in 1870, instead of waiting inside the forts for the Prussians to come."

"I think that everything favors us now, for the first time," said Frank. "The Germans have been winning—they have made a wonderful dash through Belgium and France. They must have got very close to Paris. I believe the roar of guns is as easy to hear in Paris as here. And then, suddenly, when they think they are to have it all their own way, their enemy turns and faces them, and holds them. That much we may be sure of. The battle has been raging now for four days at least, perhaps for five. And the firing has certainly not gone further away. Even if we are not gaining, it is a gain if the Germans cannot advance."

They were glad now that they were busy. A few refugees from the south were coming, driven back by the Germans. Perhaps they would rather have tried to reach Paris, but the battle stopped that. And always there were errands to be run, and messages to be carried. It went against the grain to obey the orders of German officers, and to be obliged to salute these officers whenever they were encountered, but it was necessary. And the scouts of Amiens, when they knew what their duty was, did it, no matter how unpleasant it might be.

Now the troops who formed the garrison of Amiens changed almost daily. Older men were now in the tents, and some young boys.

"The last classes of their reserves must have been called out," said Frank. "These are not first line troops that are up, but the ones who are supposed to guard lines of communication and to garrison interior fortresses."

There were times when more officers than men seemed to be in the town. Amiens seemed to be used as a point where shipments of supplies and of

ammunition for troops at the front were concentrated and diverted to the various divisions at the front. This involved the presence of a great number of officers of the commissariat department, who seemed to work night and day.

Men fight best on a full stomach, and the Germans understood this thoroughly, and saw to it that their soldiers did not have to go into battle hungry. Amiens also formed the headquarters of one branch of the German flying corps. Here aviators in great numbers were present constantly. Damaged monoplanes and biplanes were brought back for repairs. And it was this fact that brought a startling experience to the two scouts. For one day, as they rode on their bicycles on an errand through the square before the Hotel de Ville, they were arrested by a sudden fierce shout. An officer ran out toward them, his face distorted with anger. And Frank, with a sinking heart, recognized him as the man who had fired at Henri on the night they had burned the Zeppelins.

"Arrest that boy!" he cried, pointing to Henri.

"He is a spy! He is a French spy, I say!"

For a moment Frank hesitated. Then he rode away, leaving Henri to his fate. He looked back, to see two Germans holding his chum.

CHAPTER XX

A DESPERATE GAME

Frank had sped away because he was afraid that the officer might recognize him in a moment also. And yet it was not fear, in the sense that he was fearful of what might happen to him, that led him seemingly to abandon his comrade. It was the knowledge that were he too a prisoner, there would be no hope for either of them. He knew how the Germans must have regarded the destruction of the Zeppelins. It was a blow that might prove, when the final accounting was made, to have cost them the success of the invasion of France. And he had no illusions as to the fate of those who might be proved to be responsible for that.

Technically, they had not acted as spies when they had played the daring trick that had resulted in such a disaster to the German cause. But they had been non-combatants, civilians, and by the

laws of war the civilian who takes active measures of any sort against the enemy is liable to death. The German army enforced this rule strictly and invariably. Neither age nor sex was a reason for sparing one who had violated it. A woman spy, a boy of fifteen who fired at Germans, would alike be made to face a firing squad.

No. If he and Henri were caught, and this officer, who had already shown his venomous hate for them, was their accuser, they would never live to see the German defeat for which they prayed. Frank hoped that Henri would understand, that he would know that he had taken to flight because it afforded the only chance of saving him.

Frank had reasoned quickly. He had been sure that the next move of the German officer would have been to denounce him also. But while the German officer had had a good look at Henri on the night of the Zeppelin disaster, he had not seen Frank. Frank had been in the shadow when the officer had tried to murder Henri; he had taken the German by surprise, and stunned him. And

so there was no way in which the German could know him again, unless he saw him with Henri and so leaped to the conclusion that he must also have been with him on the night of disaster.

By that process of reasoning Frank argued that he might remain free to go about the town. The Germans had come to trust the Boy Scouts, understanding that their honor was pledged when they gave their word, even to an enemy. Some of the restrictions applying to the other citizens of Amiens did not restrain them. They were allowed to be on the streets after the hour of curfew, for one thing. And between the scouts and a good many of the German privates and younger officers a relation almost friendly had been established. Frank, for instance, was welcomed at one Bavarian mess, which contained several soldiers who had studied at English schools, and liked a chance to air their knowledge of the English tongue. He hoped to gain some information in this way.

Nor was he wrong. His friends had heard of the arrest of Henri, who, like Frank, was popular with

them. And it turned out that they had little use for the officer who had caused the arrest. He was known as a tyrant who had more than once during the campaign shot down his own men for slight breaches of discipline. Frank learned that he had been degraded for the destruction of the Zeppelins, for which he had been held responsible. His superiors had scouted his story of two boys who had burned the dirigibles, and had assumed that he had been careless.

Therefore Frank found it easy to discover where Henri was confined. He was to be tried by court-martial early in the morning, and for the night he was in a room on the ground floor of the Hotel de Ville.

"He's only a boy," said a Bavarian corporal. "No need to guard him closely. Even if he escaped, where could he go? Our men are everywhere."

Frank smiled to himself. He had made a discovery a day or two before that had not escaped his mind. That afternoon he managed to make

certain preparations unobserved. And when night came he was ready to hazard his own liberty, and his life, if that should prove to be necessary, in an attempt to rescue Henri. He knew the room in which Henri was confined. It was on the side of the Hotel de Ville that overlooked the river. No sentries were posted there, and it was easy for Frank to get to a spot directly underneath Henri's window. The other bank of the river was well guarded, and that was why no sentries watched the side on which was the town hall. It was argued, Frank supposed, that anyone escaping must attempt to swim the river and that when they tried to climb the other bank it would be easy to find them.

In principle, too, that was a good idea. What it did not take into account was the discovery that Frank had made—and kept to himself.

It was just before midnight when he began a faint tapping at Henri's window. He used a light bamboo cane, tipped with soft cloth, so that the sound, audible to anyone in the room, would not

carry more than a few feet. And he tapped out his signal in the Morse code very slowly, knowing that Henri would hear and understand.

In a few moments there was the sound of the window opening very gently. And then Henri slipped down beside him, taking the short drop by hanging from the window with his hands. He seized Frank's hand.

"I knew you would try to help me," he whispered. "But I had better go back. We cannot escape. There are sentries on the other bank of the Somme. They would catch us together, and you would be a prisoner, too."

"Follow me," said Frank. "Take off your shoes. Drop quietly into the water—make no sound of a splash. Swim after me. I shall show you something you do not expect to see."

Frank slipped into the water. Both boys were expert swimmers, and Frank, leading the way, slipped along in the deep shadow, without a sound. Henri swam after him. At last Frank stopped and whispered to Henri.

"You see this buttress? Dive just beyond it, and swim under water for ten feet. Put up your hands then, and rise. There will be room."

At once he dived and disappeared, and Henri followed. When they came to the surface they were in a dark, damp hole, that smelled of slime and filth. But in a moment Henri felt steps, and then there was a faint light that illuminated a vault full of water. And, to his wonder, he saw a boat, covered, except at one end, with a dark cloth.

"In with you!" whispered Frank. "Under the cloth, and lie still!"

Frank followed when Henri had obeyed. And then the boat began to move in a direction different from that by which they had entered the vault.

"I am pushing it with my hands along the wall," explained Frank, still in a whisper. "That will bring us to the opening—the smallest possible that would allow the boat to pass into the stream. Then the current will carry us down. I

have a rudder, that will hold us in the shadow of the left bank through all the turns. It is a chance —the only one we had. If all goes well, we shall drift down below the city and be safe!"

Soon they were caught in the current of the Somme. There followed a time of terrible and desperate trial and terror. At every shout they heard they thought they had been discovered. Never did they dare to raise their heads to look out. Their chance was a double one, but of the faintest, at best. Perhaps they would not be seen at all; perhaps, even if the boat was seen, no sentry would consider it worth remark.

For hours they drifted, unable to tell how far they had gone. Frank, guessing their distance by the time it had taken a piece of wood to float a certain distance during the afternoon, had hoped to be well beyond the city when daylight came. But he had not been certain.

Gradually a faint light crept through the dark, stifling cloth. The temptation to raise it and look out was terrible. But they resisted, speaking only

occasionally in whispers. With every minute that passed their chance for success grew greater. And yet at the last minute they might be caught.

At last there could be no doubt that the sun was up, and that there was full daylight. And then, suddenly, there was a sharp tug at the boat. With a groan Frank started up, and Henri too.

And what they saw was an amazed French peasant, and all around the smiling country below Amiens, which was far behind!

CHAPTER XXI

VIVE LA FRANCE!

The peasant listened in amazement to the story that they told him. But he was a real Frenchman, out of the army because of his age.

"Come with me," he said. "You shall have the best there is in my house—it is not much! Dry clothes, too. If you will wear a peasant's blouse, there are the clothes my Jean left when he went to the war!"

"We have clothes in the boat," said Frank. "Until we knew we were safe we dared not change into them. But your food will be more than welcome!"

So it proved, indeed. It was rough fare, but it seemed to both the best that they had ever tasted. And while they ate, the peasant told them what news he had.

"We hear that the French and the English are winning now," he said. "A gentleman came past

my house in an automobile this morning, and said that he had passed French troops ten miles away —cuirassiers riding this way."

"Hurrah!" cried Frank. "Henri, we must try to join them as quickly as possible. When we explain they will let us go through to where we shall be safe until we can go back to Amiens. Come on! Farewell!" This to the peasant. "We shall never forget your good food and your welcome!"

And with light hearts they set out, glad to walk, since it gave them a chance to stretch the legs that had been cramped for so many hours in the bottom of the boat.

Plainly there had been a great change in the character of the battle over night. The heavy thunder of the guns was greatly reduced in volume, though they should still have been able to hear it. And it was unmistakably coming from further north. It must be that the Germans were retreating. But they walked for three hours before they knew for certain that they were right.

They did not meet the cuirassiers of whom they

had heard. Instead a cloud of dust that they saw for two miles before men emerged beneath it turned out to be a column of French infantry. They were in their Boy Scout uniforms, and the men who first saw them at the side of the road cheered them. Soon a captain came up to them.

"Eh bien, mes enfants!" he said. "What do you do here? Where do you come from?"

They told him Amiens, and he laughed.

"And it is there, precisely, that we are going!" he laughed. "The Germans are out by now and our men were in there an hour ago!"

Frank and Henri cried out in delight at the news.

"May we go with you?" asked Frank. "We would like to go back as soon as possible."

"As to that you must ask the colonel. He will decide—and, see, here he comes now in his automobile! I will report to him that you are here."

But there was no need, for the officer who sat in the car was Colonel Menier himself, and at the sight of them he laughed aloud.

"Ah, my brave ones!" he cried. "So you are here! Ride with me! Did the Germans drive you from Amiens? I shall drive you back!"

They obeyed that order with delight. They sprang to their places in the car.

"Now tell me everything!" said Colonel Menier. "How it is that you left Amiens and how you came here?"

He leaned over first, however, and spoke to his driver, and the car shot forward, leaving the troops far behind.

And then they began the story, each telling the part of it that he knew best. At the story of how the German officer had recognized Henri and caused his arrest, he clenched his hand angrily.

"They make war even on boys!" he said, bitterly. "A brave enemy recognizes the heroism of his foes. If I had been in that man's place I should have forgotten my own defeat and praised those who had caused it!"

Then came the story of Frank's discovery of the hidden vault and the boat, and of their voyage

down the Somme and their lucky escape.

"Milles tonnerres!" he cried. "A thousand million thunders! That was well done! Through all the German sentries! Eh, well, I have a surprise for you when you reach Amiens with me, I think. Mind, I make no promises! Only wait!"

Slow as had been their flight from Amiens, their return was swift. Already they were in the outskirts. From every window hung the tricolor. Everywhere the people were mad with delight. The Germans had gone. At the sight of Colonel Menier's uniform women leaned from their windows, shrieking their joy.

In the town itself French troops were everywhere, marching through. Guns thundered along, and there were English troops as well as French. Amiens was in holiday mood. Straight through the cheering crowds the car sped on. It drew up at last before the Hotel de Ville. Sentries stood at the main door, but at the sight of Colonel Menier they saluted and gave him free passage.

Inside Colonel Menier spoke to a staff officer, who smiled and went into a room at the side. In a moment he returned.

"The general will receive you, my colonel," he said.

"Good!" He turned to Frank and Henri. "You are to meet the greatest man in France," he said. "Allons!"

They followed him into the room. By the window stood a man, not tall, but large rather than fat. He turned quiet eyes toward them. Colonel Menier saluted.

"Monsieur le General Joffre," he said. "I have the honor to present the Boy Scouts of whom you have heard—they who served General Smith-Derrien so well and who destroyed the Zeppelins near Abbeville."

"These are the ones?" said the general. "In the name of France, I thank you! And in the name of France, and by order of His Excellency the President of the Republic, I hereby decorate you! For each, the cross of the Legion of Honor!

Which is Francois Barnes?" glancing from one to the other.

Frank stepped forward. General Joffre took the cross from his own breast and pinned it to Frank's. Then he turned to another officer, and received another cross from him. And this he affixed to Henri's breast. For a moment they were overcome. And then together they cried:

"Vive la France!"